NAVVIES TO THE FOURTEENTH ARMY

By
A. H. PILCHER, C.I.E., M.C.

With a foreword by
GENERAL SIR WILLIAM SLIM, G.B.E. K.C.B., D.S.O., M.C.

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FOREWORD

By

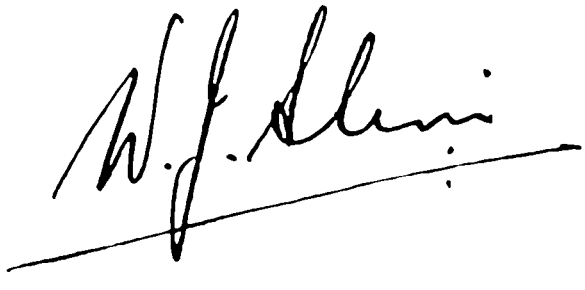
General Sir William Slim

Had it not been for the work of the Indian Tea Association I doubt if I should now be in a position to write a foreword to this or to any other book, for without their labour on the last stages of the long grim retreat from Burma in 1942 few of the Burma Army would have reached India. In the succeeding years, while we slowly turned disaster into triumph, it was again I. T. A. labour that played a great part in building and maintaining our one vital road link with India. We could not have done what we did without them.

To raise, organize, direct, move and maintain so vast a labour force against every difficulty of climate and terrain was a magnificent achievement. It was only made possible by the high efficiency of the Calcutta Headquarters of the I. T. A, the unselfish co-operation of the whole Planter Community, and above all by the cheerful, steadfast courage and resource of those planters who came with their labour as the forward officers of the force. They had the complete confidence of their men, and this confidence alone made the operation possible. The labourers themselves showed a steadiness, industry, discipline and loyalty that evoked the admiration of all of us who dealt with them.

I am glad to have an opportunity to place on record what the Fourteenth Army—and its Commander—owed to their "Navvies", the Indian Tea Association Labour.

November, 1947.



General.

Letters of appreciation of the work of members of the Tea Industry received by the Indian Tea Association.

Calcutta, 15th April, 1942.

Message from Sir Stafford Cripps to Mr. J. Jones, C.I.E., Chairman of the Indian Tea Association.

I have heard of the excellent and most helpful work your Association are doing on the Assam Burma border and am most grateful to you. I am sure your continued and energetic assistance will be of vital value to the defence of India and Burma.

VICEROY'S CAMP.

INDIA.

I am reminded that March 3rd will be the second anniversary of the beginning of a great work, the Manipur Road project, in which the Indian Tea Association has played so large a part. Since I was so closely concerned as Commander-in-Chief with this work, which enabled the withdrawal of the Burma army to be carried out in a safe and orderly manner and has since been the main line of communication for a large proportion of the troops engaged in the re-occupation of Burma, I take the opportunity of this anniversary to express to all concerned my appreciation of the value of the services they have rendered to the war effort—the management of the Indian Tea Association by their efficient organisation, the planters by the way they have carried on with reduced labour, and the labourers themselves who have worked with such good spirit. I saw the work myself on a number of occasions so am able to appreciate the difficulties overcome and the spirit shown.

NAGPUR

25th February, 1944.

Wavell F.M

COMMANDER IN CHIEF
IN INDIA

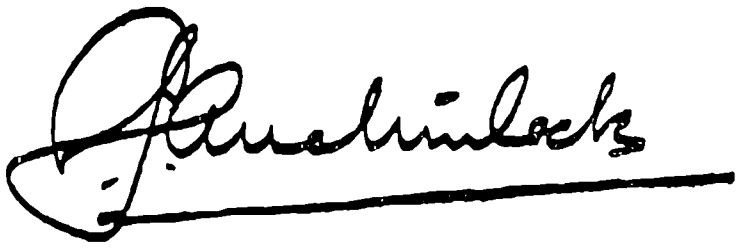
NEW DELHI.
14th June 1945.

My Dear McLaren

I am sure you will be glad to receive the appreciation of the Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia Command, conveyed in the enclosed letter, for the splendid service rendered by personnel of the estates included in your Association.

In forwarding Lord Louis Mountbatten's letter to you I would like to take the opportunity of adding my own thanks and sincere appreciation for the great service you have rendered to the Allied cause in the war against Japan I know well the value of these services from the early days, when the operational responsibility rested on the India Command, and I know too, now that Assam has again passed under India's operational control, that I can rely on the continued co-operation of your Association for such further aid as may still be necessary in our combined efforts for the final conquest of Japan.

Yours very sincerely,



A. McLaren, Esqr.,
Chairman,
Indian Tea Association,
Royal Exchange,
Calcutta.

SC. 5/1128/1

South East Asia Command Headquarters.

MY DEAR COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF,

Now that Assam has now been transferred from South East Asia Command to the India Command, I feel that I would like to express my great appreciation of the sterling work carried out by the Indian Tea Association Labour Force.

This Force has provided a large proportion of the labour required for the construction of the MANIPUR and LEDO Roads, and for almost every airfield and major project in Assam. They have worked cheerfully and well under the most trying conditions and have contributed very materially to our success in BURMA.

The Advance Guard of the Force in early March 1942 consisted of only one planter and 100 labourers from his own estate. By the end of March 1942, the total at MANIPUR Road was 28,500 men, and in October 1942 the Force numbered over 82,000. The strength now still stands at about 67,000 men. When these figures are considered, the magnitude of the effort is apparent.

I would therefore be grateful if you would convey to the Indian Tea Association and to all concerned my thanks for the work they have done ; and my appreciation of their very great contribution to the War effort.

Yours sincerely
Sd./- LOUIS MOUNTBATTEN

His Excellency,
General Sir Claude Auchinleck,
G.C.B., G.C.I.E., D.S.O., O.B.E., A.D.C.,
Commander-in-Chief,
India.

This book is dedicated to those teaplanters of North East India who had the hardest job of all. Those who, by no choice of theirs, had to stay behind on their estates, contend in anxious times with all the problems created by a rapidly advancing Japanese army when the history of Malaya was fresh in everyones mind, do their normal duties with a quarter of their normal staff, and at the same time gave with both hands all their available resources to support the Manipur Road Project.

CHAPTER I

Few people at home when they sip their early morning cup of tea realise the organization that goes to produce this.

North East India is the largest tea producing area in the world. It comprises Assam, which includes the Brahmaputra Valley, Cachar and Sylhet; the Dooars in Northern Bengal; and Darjeeling. These areas are as distinct and separate as European countries with mountain ranges and unbridged rivers separating them, while a scarcity of roads and railways contributes to their isolation. The estates in these districts are by no means contiguous, but are sparsely dotted about and separated from their neighbours by large tracts of forest and rice land.

Though geographically isolated however, psychologically they are close knit by the common bond of planting and by the Indian Tea Associations in London and Calcutta, which are the Advisory Committees on which all leading Tea Firms are represented. These Associations throw out Branches to the planting districts, and they in their turn have their roots in the tea estates. It was this cohesion that enabled the Tea Industry to answer with lightning rapidity a desperate call by the Army in the early months of 1942.

Most of us in tea suffered a sense of frustration in the early years of the war. The news from Europe was grim, the fate of Britain hung in the balance, and most of our younger members had joined the Army. But for us life continued much the same and there seemed little we could do except listen to the B. B. C. broadcasts.

It was an anxious and unsatisfactory time and we would all have been relieved if we could have taken some more active part.

Then came the news of Pearl Harbour, and then the stunning tragedy of the "Prince of Wales" and "Repulse"—sunk before they had struck a single blow. To many of us at the time this sounded like the beginning of a new round in the fight with an

ill-omened opening. Then all too swiftly came the loss of Malaya and the advance on Rangoon.

The myth of the impenetrable hill barriers between northern Burma and Assam still existed, but it was now a double edged sword as, with Rangoon invested and an army in retreat northwards, the escape by land was barred by the Assam Burma hills while there was no port north of Rangoon for an escape by sea.

On February 24th 1942 an official request was made to the Indian Tea Association, Calcutta, for assistance on certain military projects in North East India, and as a result of this request the Chairman and a Committee member attended a conference at G. H. Q. (Q.M.G's Branch) New Delhi on March 1st. There the needs were crystalised as 25,000 tea garden labour at the small wayside station of Manipur Road in Assam at the earliest possible date, and, as a second phase 75,000 labour at Ledo in extreme eastern Assam as soon as the Manipur requirements had been fulfilled.

As an example of swift mobilization and improvisation the record of the Indian Tea Association, or the I. T. A. as we shall henceforth refer to it, is hard to beat.

On their return to Calcutta a Project Sub-Committee was formed and responsibilities delegated to each member. This Sub-Committee was formed from the members of the Calcutta I. T. A. Committee and each undertook the separate tasks of Member-in-charge of:—European Personnel and Labour, Stores and Supplies, Medical Arrangements, Finance, Recruitment of fresh Labour from the Tea Districts Labour Association together with their rail movement. Each member was an expert in his particular assignment and the Chairman co-ordinated their plans.

As subsequent events proved, the staff work put in was faultless and it stood up to countless contingencies which could not possibly have been foreseen at the time. Telegraph wires hummed and by March 4th an Advance Party of one planter and 100 carefully chosen labour from his own estate, together with their own rations and medical set up, had arrived at Manipur Road station some ninety miles from the estate. To complicate matters this occurred at the time of the Indian Fagua Festival,

which to the tea garden labourer is rather like a Robbie Burns night continued for four or five days.

The Advance Party's mission was to prepare reception camps for the main body of the labour which was due to start arriving in another three days. It was a minor detail, so much so that it was never even mentioned at the time or subsequently, that there was literally no material of any kind with which to make these camps, however the Advance Party knew their job, and from jungle leaves and branches made bivouacs well sited near water.

By this time Agency Houses in Calcutta had sent out by telegram to their managers in north east India what in retrospect we may now call a general mobilization order, detailing planters and labour drafts to proceed to Manipur Road station, and from the 6th March onwards these started to arrive.

Manipur Road was then a small wayside station on the Bengal and Assam main line from Lumding to Mariani. It was best known as the jumping off place for the Indian State of Manipur, distant 133 miles away over the hills with a single track and extremely hazardous road connecting the two, open one way only during daylight and at stated times. It had a bazar of the typical Indian type, a Police Post, a Dispensary, a Post and Telegraph Office, a Petrol Pump, and a Dak Bungalow. The latter consisted of four small bedrooms, each about 15 feet square, and a communal dining room in the centre. The railway station was known as Manipur Road but the adjacent village was called Dimapur, famous chiefly for its old ruins and fresh mosquitoes.

On Saturday March 7th 1942, just six days after the original request had been made to the Chairman, I. T. A. mobilization was in full swing and the resources of tea commenced to pour into Manipur Road. The journey from mid-Assam to Manipur Road by rail on that date was somewhat reminiscent of mobilization in August 1914; every wayside station had a contingent of tea garden labourers waiting to entrain, each man was equipped with a hoe, two blankets, sufficient food for a fort-night, and the inevitable hurricane lamp. There was a large send off party of wives and relatives who waved and cheered as the train drew out, and the spirit of adventure was obviously abroad.

At Dimapur the army at that stage consisted of: The Royal Engineers, The R. A. S. C., and a grossly over-worked but

imperturbable Sub-Area Commandant, all of whom were like ourselves in the pangs of childbirth, but we at any rate had the advantage of being in familiar country, whereas for them it was an unmapped and unknown land of strange speech and customs.

The Indian Tea Association had sent up a Project Sub-Committee Member from Calcutta to assist in launching the venture, and had also nominated a planter to take sole charge locally under the title of Chief Tea Labour Liaison Officer or C. T. L. L. O. as he was usually known. These two and four or five planters arrived on dates between the 4th and 7th March, the latter date being when the large drafts of labour started to arrive. The labour went straight out to their bivouac camps anything up to five miles away to the accompaniment of a severe hail and rain storm. Each of the camps had a planter in charge, and the remaining three members (which included the Calcutta Committee member, and the newly appointed C. T. L. L. O.) set themselves up as "Headquarters Indian Tea Association Labour" in the last remaining vacant dak bungalow room. This did service as bedroom for three and office, the latter consisting of one communal table at which there was always one occupant and a queue of two. The moment the occupant left the table for a second the next man took possession and with a breast stroke motion cleared all pending letters to either side and started off on his own lot. All three had obviously been strong swimmers in their younger days. By this time they had contacted Colonel (later Brigadier) "Mike" Gilpin, the Engineer Officer in charge, who with his staff, occupied, slept, and worked, in one of the other dak bungalow bedrooms.

Now let us review the road from Dimapur southwards as it was on March 8th 1942. The Milestones started at zero at Dimapur and continued to mile 133 at Imphal, the capital of Manipur State.

MS 0—MS 9. Dimapur to Nichuguard. The road ran flat and straight between thick forest and rice-land, the former predominating. The surface was good tar macadam, but only 12 feet wide and any passing vehicle had to slow down to 3 or 4 m.p.h., and draw half off the road. At Nichuguard there was a gate and a very strict one way traffic control.

MS 9—MS 18. Nichuguard to Ghaspani. (1,700 feet above sea level.) Immediately after passing the gate at Nichuguard the road entered the gorge which was about four miles long and can best be described as a fisherman's paradise and a motorist's nightmare. The road consisted of a ledge cut out of the almost perpendicular cliff. On the left the rock rose straight up to anything up to 500 feet, on the right it fell sheer away to the river 200 feet below which flowed through the gorge in a series of rapids and tempting pools. The road followed the river bed and was full of blind corners as it twisted and turned and doubled back on itself. At MS 14 it emerged from the gorge and went through rolling country for the next two miles, after which it started climbing rapidly and tortuously until Ghaspani at 1700 feet above sea level.

MS 18—MS 27. Ghaspani to Piphema. (3,000 feet above sea level.) The climb from Nichuguard to Piphema was only a mild introduction to the next nine miles when the road rises 1,300 feet climbing up the southern side of the mountain range with the valley always visible on the right. In many parts of the road there was an impression of being in an aeroplane with an unrestricted view of the plains of Assam to the west.

MS 27—MS 37. Piphema to Zubza. (3,000 feet.) At Piphema the road crosses over a saddle and a new valley to the north east opens up. The road is a contour cut in the high hillside with a sharp and deep drop to the left. Apart from dropping down into re-entrants to cross streams and some sharp ascents on the other side no appreciable increase in altitude is made in this stretch.

MS 37—MS 47. Zubza to Kohima. (4,700 feet). The road continues its fairly level contour until about mile 40 when it starts to climb sharply and rises 1,700 feet in the next seven miles.

MS 47—MS 57. Kohima to Zhakhama. (4,800 feet). The road now winds tortuously along the lower but precipitous slopes of the mountain of Japvo, whose summit is only just over four miles away to the west with a height of 9,890. The majority of the going is just a rock ledge with a precipice on the left and massive cliff on the right.

MS 57—MS 67. Zhakhama to Mao (5,700 feet.) Very much the same type of road and still on the lower slopes of Japvo. Mao

is the halting place where the up and down traffic changes over, and the highest point of the road between Dimapur and Imphal.

MS 67—MS 81. Mao to Maram. (4,500 feet.) Much the same type of rugged precipitous road, full of blind corners, spurs and re-entrants, but by this time one has begun to take them for granted.

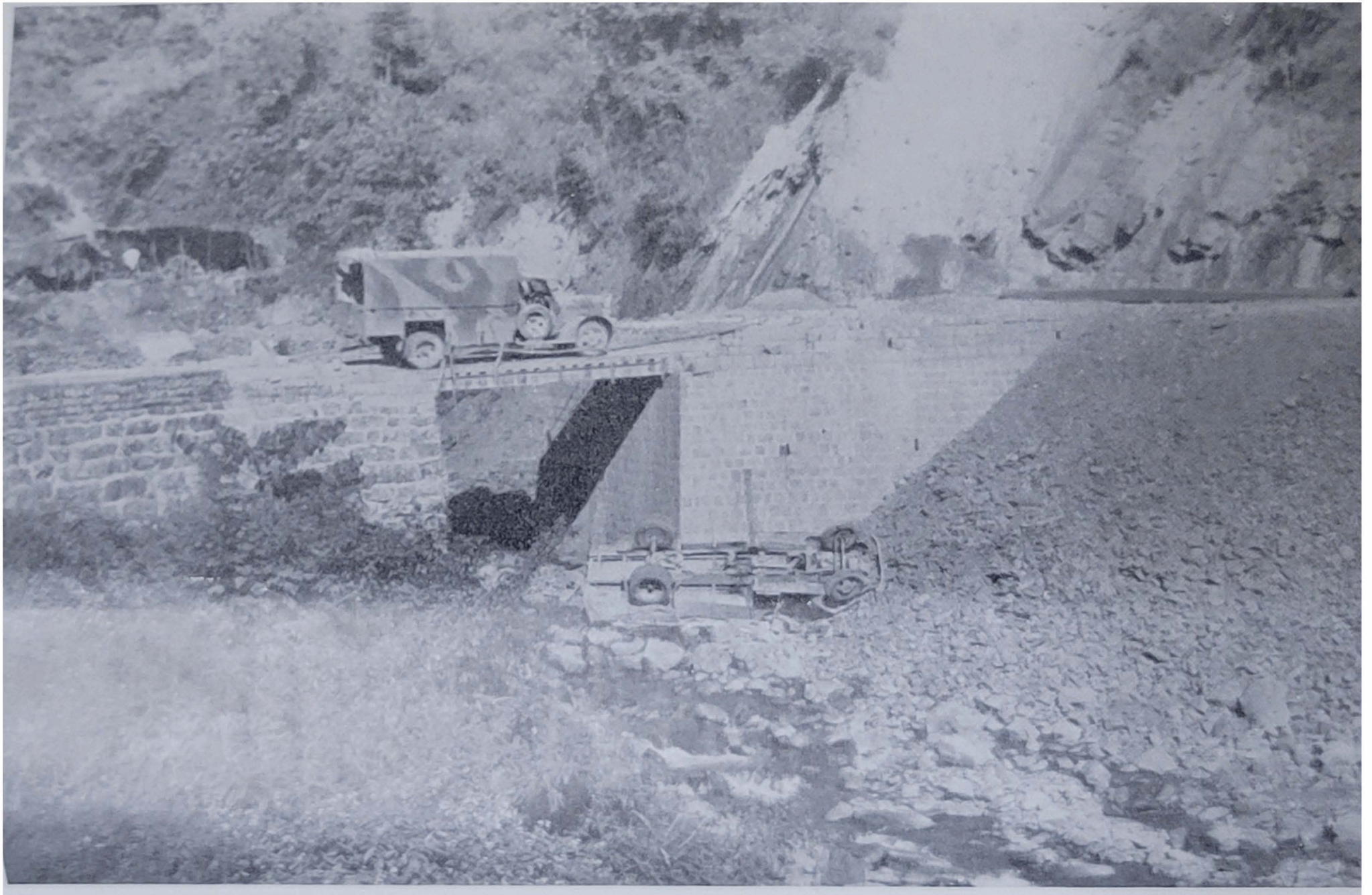
MS 81—MS 92. Maram to Karong (3,500 feet). The road crosses over a saddle at Maram and there is a gorgeous view of valleys on either side, in which flow the same river—the head-waters of the Barak—flowing south west down in the left hand valley and doubling back north in the right hand one. After crossing over the saddle at Maram the road changes over to the west side of the mountains and drops down to Karong where the Barak crosses under the road and doubles back north.

MS 96—MS 106. Karong to Kangpokpi. (3,000 feet). The way is now through some fine undulating country, reminiscent of the Scotch moors, with mountain ranges on either side. There is a traffic control gate at Kangpokpi, after which the road is wider and uncontrolled.

MS 106—MS 118. Kangpokpi to Kanglatombi. This is the proper entrance to the Imphal Plain and one passes along an undulating valley with woods and hills on either side, again reminiscent of Scotch moorland.

MS 118—MS 133. Kanglatombi to Imphal. The Imphal Plain now opens out, and the road in places has long straights bordered by silver oaks.

MS 133—MS 161. Imphal to Pallel. Soon after leaving Imphal the road reverts to an unmetalled dirt track at this time of the year covered in a six inch layer of dust, which, after depositing about half an inch on men, animals, and vehicles, dissipates itself in a haze as far as the eye can see. Bridges were on a par with the condition of the road, though work had already been started on re-inforcing and replacing these. There are long straight stretches bordered on either side by the rice fields of the Imphal Plain, and in the south towards Pallel a solid wall of mountains rises arbruptly from the plain.



Typical road scene in the early days

MS. 161. Pallel. This was the virtual end of the road, and a river nestling under the mountains formed a barrier to further progress, though at this time of the year one could drive a car through a wide but shallow water splash. On the face of the hills to the south of the water splash there was already a deep gash visible from some three or four miles away. This was the start of the new road to Tammu in Burma, 50 miles away over two ranges of barren waterless mountains rising up to nearly 6,000 feet again after the 1,700 at Pallel.

Note. Heights above sea level quoted above are in most cases approximate.

CHAPTER II

On the evening of March 7th it was suggested that the I. T. A. might be asked to put labour into the hills half way between Pallel and Tammu—about 180 miles from Dimapur. This constituted a considerable advance on our original commitment which was to work at the Dimapur Base within a radius of approximately nine miles of Manipur Road station. Nothing definite was asked or decided but it was arranged that Col. Gilpin and two senior I. T. A. representatives should go to roadhead at Pallel on the 8th and make a preliminary reconnaisance.

The party started off at 7-30 A.M. and reached Pallel about 4 in the afternoon, where they contacted the subsequently famous No. 1 (Indian) Excavating Company. Shortly after leaving Imphal they met the I. T. A. Advance Party planter completely camouflaged in a covering of two inches of Imphal dust. Whether this was an intentional disguise or not was not known, but he had flouted all peace-time tradition by daring to enter the Manipur State without the necessary permits. He and his band, having completed their mission at Dimapur, had taken time by the forelock and moved 140 miles south towards Burma. A most fortunate piece of anticipation as it turned out.

At Pallel, in company with the O. C. No. 1 Excavating Company, the party visited roadhead, which was then about three miles up in the mountains south of Pallel. It was a most inspiring sight; Indian personnel were doing acrobatics with bulldozers on the 60 degree slopes of the mountains. The roar of the machines was deafening and they used every available bit of daylight from dawn to dusk. Rock faces necessitating tedious blasting were frequent, and when they struck these the bulldozers by-passed them by cutting their own track below the rock and then climbing up the hillside back to the trace on the far side of the rock, where they continued carving a road out of the mountains.

After spending the night with the Excavating Company at Pallel the party left for Dimapur on the morning of the 9th and arrived back about 4 P.M.

In the meantime Major General E. Wood had arrived at Dimapur to take up the post of Administrator General Eastern Frontier Communications, and, after a brief introduction, the I. T. A. were invited to send their representatives to a most important and secret conference at 7-30 P.M.

General Wood occupied the end room of the dak bungalow, the next room being Colonel Gilpin's, next to which was the middle room used as the General's Mess and Conference room. The I. T. A. were in the next room, and the last was reserved for some as yet unknown person.

The General's conference was confined to the Sub-Area Commander, Col. Gilpin, a Political Officer, the Indian Tea Association Representatives, and the General's Staff Officer. It was opened by the General explaining that the news from Burma was most grave. Rangoon had fallen two days ago, followed by the loss of the Armoured Brigade. As if this were not enough, local labour employed on making the road from Pallel to Tamu, after contact with demoralised refugees and an outbreak of cholera in their camps, had all absconded and work was virtually at a standstill. He went on to explain that the Pallel—Tammu road had originally been designed for an offensive purpose, but in view of the grave news from Burma it might be called upon to play a different and even more important role, but to be of any use for this, the road must be put through not later than May 7th—in just under two months from that day.

In reply to the General's query for suggestions, Col. Gilpin said the Indian Tea Association was the only hope they had, and the latter then agreed to put their labour into the Lokchao valley, 24 miles over the hills from Pallel, and accepted the urgent request to move the first 1,000 up to Pallel, 161 miles away, at 7 A.M. on the 10th, *i.e.* in under 12 hours time. The Conference then broke up.

In the meantime the I. T. A. mobilization had been proceeding, and in addition to the three or four Headquarters Staff there were half-a-dozen planters in camps with their labour, and more labour and planters in the process of arriving. We were now to reap the benefit of the Calcutta staff work which had despatched all labour drafts completely self-supporting in

food, blankets, and medical outfits, for at any rate the first fortnight. As the I. T. A. representatives left the conference at about 8 P.M. a planter triumphantly drove up, to the dak bungalow, having at last reached his goal after an aventurous drive by car from his garden nearly 100 miles away. He was promptly detailed to get into his car again, drive throughout the night over the unfamiliar road to Imphal, and by not later than 4 P.M. on the following day have a Reception Camp ready in Imphal for 1000 labour with hot food and accommodation all ready for them. He wasted no time in words and the Camp and food were ready at 4 P.M. on the 10th.

After his departure the remaining planters worked far into the night on arrangements for the move. Volunteers were called for the Lokchao Project and all stepped forward. Eventually four, which was as many as could be spared, were detailed, and they immediately returned to their camps to pack up and marshal the labour for the move.

Next morning, March 10th, at 7 A.M. 1,000 tea garden labour, together with Indian Supervisory and Medical Staff, were lined up with very passable dressing by the right outside their various camps on the Dimapur Nichuguard road, and eventually with some inevitable delay in the arrival of the army transport, as many as the latter could cater for were embussed and left for Imphal.

Meanwhile the peripatetic and indefatigable Advance Party, last reported wearing disguise just south of Imphal, had pushed on to Pallel and established a bivouac camp alongside a stream just under the first mountains—a magnificent piece of intelligent anticipation. The planter in charge was rumoured to be muttering Chindwin in his sleep, and in his shadow was always to be found the generous proportions and cheerful personality of the Indian Assistant Medical Officer from his estate. And so was founded "The Imphal & Forward Areas" group of the I. T. A. though amongst the planters they were always known as "Rogers Rangers" from the book and film of that name.

We shall hear a lot of them later on.

The I. T. A. organization down at the Dimapur base was now building up fast, and both planters and their labour

drafts were arriving in an uninterrupted stream, being despatched to the work camps and, after one day for settling in, were being put straight on to military projects. It was now possible to draw up an organization to deal with all the problems of administering an eventual force of some 28,000 distributed over 200 miles of disconnected mountainous terrain. Members were therefore detailed to take charge of the following Branches:—"Q", dealing with all accounts, records, pay, and stores, including station yard work, which thanks to the Calcutta Sub-Committee's efforts was now becoming considerable.

"Reception", dealing with all rail movement, reception, and despatch to camps of labour, which was incidentallly an all-round-the-clock job, in the initial stages with no reliefs.

"Transport" which was responsible for all transportation of Indian Tea Association Stores and Personnel. Maintenance of vehicles, and provision of spares for these and the private cars used by the planters. And "Medical", which was in the energetic hands of two veteran Tea District Medical Officers, who cheerfully saddled a burden which would have broken many a younger man.

These various branches set up their own offices in bashas and tents round and about Dimapur. The small bedroom in the dak bungalow was now suffering from congestion and obviously could not continue much longer as H. Q. Office, Bedroom for three, Reception room for all planters on arrival from their estates, and a consequent running mess. A combined mess was accordingly started in the jungle just east of the dak bungalow, and consisted in the initial stages of a tarpaulin stretched over two old card tables, a solitary tin bath with hessian cloth modestly draped round it but nothing except the stars above, and a series of wig-wams under the trees made of tarpaulin sheets supported mainly on optimism. It was essentially a mobile mess and necessarily so as the Railway Company of the R. E's were now being very busy, and it was no uncommon thing to go to sleep in virgin forest and wake up at dawn in the lee of a goods train.

No sooner was the skeleton Base organization drawn up than serious administrative problems reared up their heads to confront it, and there were all the well known headaches of logistics to contend with. Thanks to the forethought of all drafts being

warned beforehand that they must be completely self-supporting for 14 days, there was that much respite, but the earlier drafts were rapidly eating into their resources, and the assembling of an adequate Staff and Transport to deal with the numerical equivalent of two army divisions was not a matter to be dealt with in twenty four hours.

The various administrative branches have already been listed, but at this stage they were skeleton only and almost completely without resources. Chief amongst these last vacuums was transport and everyone knows that the lack of this can paralyze any operation both in war and peace. A large Tea Company with its centre about a hundred miles away had sent in the initial stages 2 Tractors and Trailers and six lorries, and these prevented disaster in the first week or so, but were quite incapable of dealing with the problem that was rapidly building up. In the meantime a most urgent S. O. S. was sent to the Chairman Assam Branch, Indian Tea Association for all the transport he could lay hands on. He acted on this occasion, as on all others, with an immediate response and lorries from the tea estates were detailed to proceed to Dimapur at once. During the next four days however the anxiously awaited lorries failed to materialise and it eventually transpired they were held up some 50 miles away as the bridges on the only road leading into Dimapur from the north were unserviceable and under repair. However at last they got through and it was a heartening scene, and reminiscent of the marshalling of the Paris taxis to save the French capital in 1914, to see the tea garden lorries with all the familiar names on them streaming into Dimapur. I. T. A. Transport quickly sorted them out and listed them, (and it must be admitted that some civilian lorries not intended for the I. T. A. came into the bag too, temporarily anyway) and during the next three months had transported 29,000 labour, rationed them, and brought 20,000 refugees from Imphal on their return journey. In all this they had one fatal casualty, due to a road collapse, a fine tribute to the tea garden drivers whose previous experience in most cases had been limited to driving on the level and secluded tea estate roads.

Another problem was water supply. Cholera and dysentry were already in evidence at nearly all the streams, brought in

by the unfortunate refugees from Burma, many of who had died at the water point. The Medical side however had provided a "Water Sterilization" Unit, run by the Scientific Officers of the Indian Tea Association Experimental Station, who sterilized water by the system of electrolysis, the necessary equipment consisting of a 6 volt battery, some pumps and piping, and two silver coins as anodes. This unit rapidly covered all the camps and, throughout the three and a half years during which Indian Tea Association Labour was employed, at Manipur Road, had a most enviable record. Cholera did break out occasionally in camps, but there was always a logical reason—as for instance in one case where all the labour religiously drank nothing but sterilized water, and then went and cleaned their teeth in a near-by cholera infested stream.

Urgent needs in material and stores were passed on to the Chairman, Assam Branch, Indian Tea Association, situated 75 miles away, and he invariably ferreted out some estate that could meet these and had them despatched immediately.

Planters in a rice-growing centre 100 miles away bought and stored large stocks of fodder, while a planter in another district near a local Treasury drew and delivered to Dimapur vast sums of money to meet immediate needs. The planters rations also had to be thought of as they too had come equipped for a fort-night only on their resources. Shops in the Assam Valley were scoured and immediate supplies bought up to start a European canteen, while a large indent was sent down to Calcutta to stock and maintain this on a longer term policy. This canteen, subsequently allowed to avail itself on payment of stores from army canteens, flourished throughout the whole Manipur Road Project and was the source from which all planter personnel drew their rations.

Work at the Base was not popular, neither was it healthy. In the first three months one planter in every three was arbitrarily, though luckily in most cases only temporarily, put on the sick list. The Base organization however always accepted their lot cheerfully and worked as a very fine team.

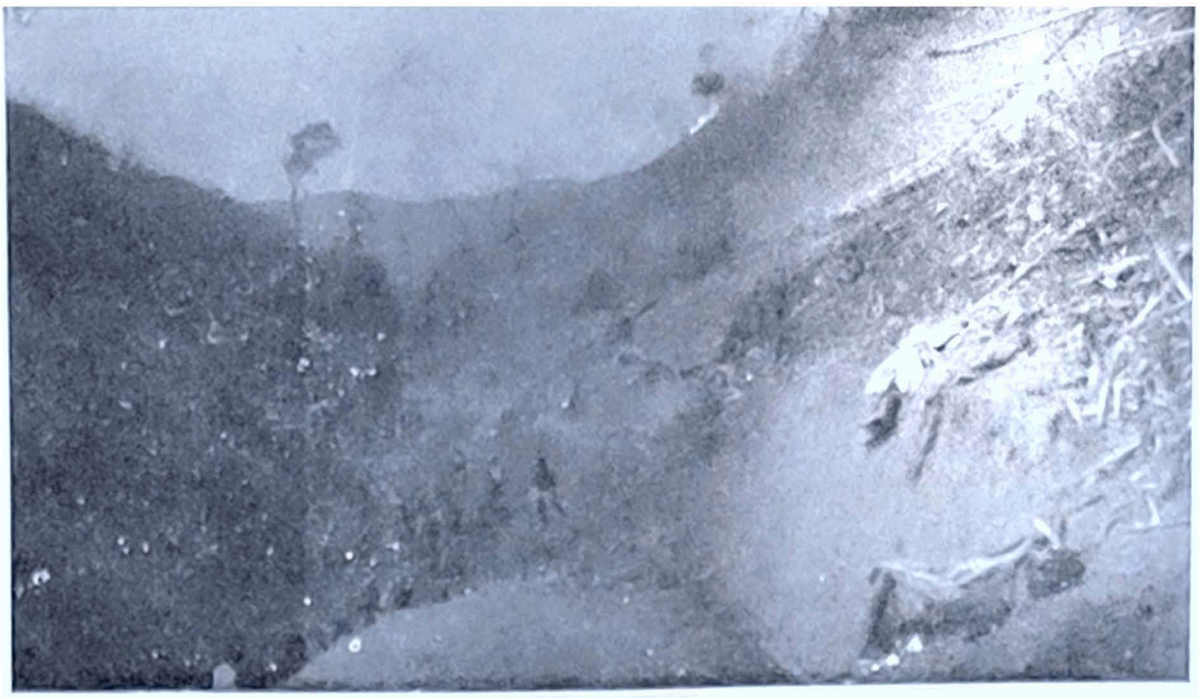
By March 11th nearly 4,000 labour were already at work and new drafts were arriving at the rate of anything up to 2,000 a day. Work camps were springing up all round Dimapur to a

radius of 25 miles, and were engaged on widening the road, quarrying stone, building petrol storage depots, and installations for the Ordnance stores, which were now arriving in large quantities with no cover for them.

At this time however the main interest was focussed on "Rogers Rangers", the Imphal & Forward Areas Group, and the desperate need for getting the road through to Burma in time. We last heard of them on March 10th when they moved off from Dimapur. On arrival at Imphal that same afternoon they found a hot meal waiting for them and comfortable quarters for the night in the Assam Rifles drill hall, lent by the courtesy of their C. O. The Political Agent, Manipur State, had also given every assistance in the provision of rice in bulk and the necessary cash to purchase it.

On March 12th the first drafts moved up to Pallel and a few days later were in position in the Lokchao valley, which caused General Wood to report officially that the I. T. A. "had moved with great speed and precision". The march in over the hills was a gruelling business with various problems attached, again chiefly those of transport. Everything had to be portered in and that over a rough track that rose 4,000 feet in ten miles. The distance from Pallel to Lokchao was 24 miles and the march in was made in two stages with a night halt at the minute and extremely drab little bungalow down in the hollow at Tengnopal. Even water for the journey had to be carried and for this another S. O. S. was sent to Assam asking for all available empty bottles procurable. Needless to say they arrived. Porterage of rations in was done by Manipuri porters, Convicts from the Imphal jail escorted by warders and Assam Rifle guards, Native ponies and bullocks from the Assam Rifles, and Mules.

A constant stream of demoralised refugees was meeting and passing the labour marching in, and all sorts of depressing rumours were rife. After hearing a particularly depressing crop of these, one planter was awakened in the middle of the night at Tengnopal to find yellow faces bending over him. His first thought was naturally that they were Japs, but they turned out to be the first of the Chinese army on its way out from Burma. The Lokchao valley was a most depressing place down in a hollow



Hand cut road in the making between Lokchao and Tammu

Lockchao Valley in April 1942

Road in the making

with ranges on either side and corpses at the stream in between. Fully alive to the dangers, both physical and moral, of these the planters first job was to bury them with their own hands, after that they set to and made the best camps for the labour they could out of jungle leaves and branches. There was now a continuous line of camps on the 24 miles from Pallel to Lokchao, with the bull-dozers of No. 1 Excavating Company working about half way in between. Labour working on the bulldozer stretch was employed on trimming up, draining, and rough-surfacing the road, and forward of that they cut the road by hand. The Lokchao camp worked both north and south and much of the road between Lokchao and Tammu in Burma was cut entirely by hand.

CHAPTER III

Superficially things did'nt look too bad now. The I. T. A. labour were at work on the Dimapur Base and in a radius of 25 miles from it. The Public Works Department, aided by local labour, were at work from Mile 25 to Imphal; and a joint party of Sappers, P. W. D., and a commercial firm of bridge builders, were on the road from Imphal to Pallel, while from there to Tammu, in addition to the resources mentioned previously, local Kookis and Nagas were helping, the latter rationed and administered by the I. T. A.

Few people had the time or opportunity to read a newspaper or listen to the wireless in the early days of April 1942, but in the midst of a spate of rumours brought in by the refugees from Burma the dispassionate account by the Burma Oil Company personnel, who before leaving had blown up their wells at Yenangyung, was not reassuring. Neither were the faces of senior officers as they came away from conferences, but the most significant pointer was the, if possible, redoubled energy that Brigadier (as he now was) "Mike" Gilpin put into the Manipur Road. His command covered all Assam, which included the Ledo Road and the airfields and communications to be in the Surma Valley and Assam, and the focal point of all these was now very definitely Manipur Road.

Of all the factors that combined to get the road through and the army out of Burma, the most potent was the personality and drive of "Mike". He drove everybody hard, but no one harder than himself, and with it combined a charm and sense of humour that always popped up at the right moment. It was these qualities that earned him the respect and affection of all who worked with him. Mike usually arrived with a shriek of brakes and departed with a squeal of his rear tyres. On airfields they have a thing called a "sausage" which shows one which way the wind is blowing, Mike had a similar device in the shape of his staff hat. When he threw it on the ground and stamped on it one knew the wind was adverse and approach difficult. When he pushed his hat to the back and scratched his head one knew that things were not too bad, and when the hat was over his eyes the wind was fair. Altogether an excellent arrangement, but hats must have been quite a feature in the Gilpin budget.

Anyway about this time the expenditure in hats suddenly went up, and a lot of them must have been lost during his personal recce's on the gap between Dompal and Lokchao which abounded in rock faces. It was always a toss up whether to take the most direct route with the inevitable delay of tediously blasting a ledge across a rock face, or to seek an alternative and longer route which missed the rock.

Shortly after this period, on April 19th, the Chairman I. T. A. and the Committee member in charge of labour and personnel arrived for their first visit to the Manipur Road Project. Since the start in the early days of March countless other demands had been made on the I. T. A., and now that these had all been got going it was possible for these two members to do a fairly extended tour. The tempo of life at that time was such that they were whisked straight off the train at 7-30 P.M. and into immediate conference with General Wood. The General was, like many others, in desperate straits for transport, and after seeing the performance of the I. T. A. Transport Fleet, made a pressing request for another 100 tea garden lorries to carry army stores from Dimapur to Imphal and beyond under the administration of the I. T. A. The Tea Industry had by now been fairly well drained of its lorries, but the Chairman said that if the General had to have more lorries the I. T. A. would find them somewhere, and so I. T. A. "Transport" took on and fulfilled one more of its many outside commitments.

Previous to this there had been some rather pertinent discussions on transport. It has been mentioned previously that when the original I. T. A. lorries arrived some other civilian lorries accompanied them and these found their way temporarily into the I. T. A. "bag". At a conference subsequently this was admitted and it was agreed to hand them over to their rightful war-time owners, the R. E's for whom they had been requisitioned. The General made the reasonable comment that the I. T. A. had been jambed for transport, saw some unemployed lorries and promptly put them on to a job of work, which was nothing to be ashamed of; now however they must all be handed over to the R.E's, which the I. T. A. undertook to do. Two days later the

C. T. L. L. O. received an urgent summons at 11 P.M. to attend a General's conference immediately. The General was definitely in an official mood, and after recapitulating the foregoing, said that it had now been reported to him that the I. T. A. still had these lorries—over 100 of them. The C. T. L. L. O. replied that his information was that they had all been handed over immediately after the previous conference. The General however evidently found this hard to accept, and asked the C. T. L. L. O. to attend another conference with him at 9 A.M. the next morning in company with the I. T. A. Transport officer, and in the meantime to prepare a full statement of all I. T. A. transport vehicles with their present location.

The next morning the I. T. A. pair attended on the General who was still in official mood. He repeated the charge and asked the Transport officer what he had to say. The latter was a very tired and busy man, he also came from Lancashire where they believe in plain speech, "It's all complete bloody tripe," he replied at which the General's mouth twitched and his eyes twinkled as he replied: "Well, that's all I want to know. That's O. K. by me, Sam" and it was on these good relations that the I. T. A. transport accepted yet another commitment to transport army stores.

The I. T. A. Committee members spent the next day at Base visiting camps, offices, and stores, and in frequent conference with the General. After that they set off on a tour of the Imphal and Forward areas reaching the base camp at Pallel just before dusk on the 21st April. All along the road there was an impression of immense activity and at Pallel the evening air was fresh and keen; it was very much a camp life and their accommodation for the night consisted of a tent with the fly open to allow some portion of the third camp bed to be under cover, which prompted Mr. Clive Street to say to Mr. Mangoe Lane as he blew out the light: "I don't think we'll need the punkah to-night, E. J."

On the 22nd April, six weeks after the arrival of the first main labour drafts at Dimapur, the I. T. A. Committee members set off from Pallel to go by road to Lokchao which was now road-head. From here further progress was

barred by the Lokchao river but the 22nd, very fittingly, was the day on which the Bailey bridge over the river was to be launched and thus enable the road to enter the last lap for Burma, some 25 miles away, *but*, and it was a very large but, there were only 14 days left to put the road through and any day a break in the weather might paralyse all work.

The party left Pallel about 8 A.M. and started off on the escalator-like climb up to Shenam, or the Saddle as it was more commonly known as. The road climbs 4,000 feet in ten miles, or an average gradient of 1 in 13; averages, as we know, seldom work out, and in this case there were many dips in the ten miles which resulted in there being many long and tortuous stretches of 1 in 7. From Pallel the road shot up skywards immediately and after the first half mile there was a marvellous birds eye view of the Imphal Plain. After that the road could only be described as a fairy story much the same as the wood-cut illustrations in a Grimms Fairy Tale book. One saw gigantic mountains ahead with a thin line encircling the summit, and they seemed to belong to another hemisphere, but this was the road and the only land link with Burma.

From the "Saddle" began the long descent to the Lokchao valley with a drop in altitude of 5,000 feet in 15 miles, an average gradient of 1 in 16. There was an appreciable rise in temperature as the altitude dropped and one got further south. The distance from Pallel to Lokchao was only 25 miles but a 6 m.p.h. average was a good one and attainable only provided there were no "incidents" in the shape of jibbing vehicles or temporary hold-ups for road work in progress.

At Lokchao the Bailey bridge had just been launched and bull-dozers were busy clearing the nearside approach, this was composed of earth and large boulders which the bull-dozers were moving in much the same way as a terrier works at a rat hole — a frantic dash, full-stop, back away, and then a frantic dash again. After a picnic lunch at an I. T. A. camp the party left for the return journey to Imphal and, with frequent stops to fill up a boiling radiator, they eventually reached the Imphal base just before dusk. The I. T. A. had found comfortable and commodious quarters in some thatch and reed buildings just alongside the main road, and many who

made the dreary journey from Burma in the spring of 1942 will remember with gratitude the open house kept to all and sundry by the three or four planters who temporarily lived there. The I. T. A. Committee members stayed the night and as events turned out were amongst the last guests, as the building was destroyed in the Jap raid just after a fortnight later.

During this period there were definite signs of unrest among the labour and in view of the circumstances it was scarcely to be wondered at. The original request for help by the army had stated that it was only a stop-gap requirement for about six weeks while other labour was being drafted in, and managers had therefore been instructed to call for volunteers on this understanding. The whole control of tea garden labour is based on the labourer learning to have implicit confidence in his sahib's word, and with the six week period expiring, and the stream of refugees and alarming rumours increasing daily, it was natural that the tea labourers should begin to take an anxious interest in the date of their return to their families, particularly as rumours were also rife about the future security of the tea gardens, and indeed shortly after this some of them were bombed. On the other side there was the army's desperate need and by now complete dependence on the tea garden labour to get the last lap through to Burma in the next fourteen days. Selected labourers were therefore given leave back to their gardens to form a link between the two, and in many cases their own managers made the long and difficult journey from their estates to the Manipur camps to give them news of their relatives and reassure them personally. This undoubtedly had a calming effect and resulted in the labour extending their period of service to three months. It all took time however and during the last fourteen days it was often a toss up whether the labour and their manager would meet at Manipur Road or on their own estate.

During the last week in April there was a noticeable increase in the refugees, included amongst whom were the first trickles of the Burma army, and more ominous still, Jap recce planes started to take an interest in the whole scene from Tamu to Dimapur. There was no Ack Ack and the planes did what they liked, which seemed to consist of frequent recces. over Palel, Imphal, and Dimapur. Into the latter place the refugees were now increasing

markedly in number and being tended all along the way from Tammu by the I. T. A. Refugee Organization, this however is outside the scope of this book and is dealt with in "Forgotten Frontier." Many of these refugees had had contact with the Japs and some of them gave us the grim information that the Japs did not intend to bomb the road too badly as they looked forward to making full use of it themselves.

About this time the weather showed signs of breaking and there was a surplus of wet days, added to this there were frequent outbreaks of cholera and cerebral meningitis amongst the labour in the camps, and these factors combined with the ever increasing flow of refugees (and their rumours) combined to make the labour very "jumpy", particularly at the forward end. In the midst of this the finish of the race against time was a grim one with the issue in doubt right up to the end. There was a definite schedule of progress to be made each day but every one was extended to his utmost to keep up to this and it had no allowance for unforeseen contingencies. However the road to Tammu was finally put through on May 5th, one day ahead of schedule, and in view of the all round disconcerting news from the Forward Areas two senior members of the I. T. A. H. Q. base left for Imphal on May 6th.

On the way up the signs were not reassuring; at the halt at Mao there was a long line of traffic proceeding downwards, *i.e.* north, in the direction of Dimapur, and this included lorry loads of wounded and L of C troops. Everyone agreed that the situation was "fluid". After a night at Pallel where the two I. T. A. members contacted the planter in charge of Rogers Rangers, the three set off by car to Tammu on the morning of May 8th. On the Pallel—Tammu road the signs were even more ominous; The Assam Regiment were at Lokchao and seemed a bit non-plussed; they had had orders to reinforce our forces in Burma, but these had suddenly been changed and they were now on their way back again. As it subsequently turned out they had been called back to guard against a rumoured Jap attempt to do a pincer movement round Lokchao and cut the road behind it.

The traffic on the new road from Lokchao to Tammu was rather like that on the road to Aldershot on the last night of the

Tattoo, though augmented by people on foot, including walking wounded, small parties of troops, some without arms, all proceeding north, while all the roadside camps were packed up and ready to move—some already on the move. Refugees on foot and in vehicles were all going the same way, and the one heartening sight was a saloon car, with its show room polish still on it, chauffeur driven, with two faultlessly coiffeured ladies in the back—much in the style of attending a first night. They were at any rate retreating in good order.

Under these circumstances it was scarcely to be wondered that the first impressions of the legendary land of Burma were somewhat disappointing. Tammu could only be described as the dustiest place in Asia; in the light jungle fringing it were all the depressing signs of withdrawal, abandoned lorries and cars, improvised camps, and everyone living alfresco all covered with dust. Petrol was as scarce as gold, and this explained the abandoned transport now that the road was through. Not unnaturally under these conditions the labour in the Indian Tea Association camp at Tammu was reported as being distinctly jumpy, though confident that their sahibs would see them through.

The general impression seemed only too obvious, and after a night at Tammu the I. T. A. party started the journey back to Pallel. In the absence of any senior army officer to advise them, the C. T. L. L. O. then gave instructions to the planter in charge of Rogers Rangers that he was to withdraw all his labour back to Pallel as quickly as possible, *but* there must be no sign of panic or undue hurry. These orders were carried out faultlessly and the move was completed in a most orderly and expeditious manner without the jettisoning of any stores of camp equipment. The necessity for the orders is best explained by the experience of a planter and his labour in the forward group during the period May 10th/11th. A senior officer accosted him very early in the morning:

"Hullo. Who are you?"

"I'm supervising the labour working on this road, Sir."

"What!!! Have you got labour here?"

"Yes, sir, they're working over there."

"Well, I should get them out as quick as you can. There's been no one between you and the Jap for the past twenty four hours."

Two or three hours after the C. T. L. L. O. had given the withdrawal order, and when preparations for the move were already in progress, a senior army officer gave official sanction for this, and also mentioned that the Commander-in-Chief, General (as he then was) Wavell was at that moment in the Imphal area. On the journey back to Dimapur the Indian Tea Association party saw the C-in-C's flag on the car ahead of them, and in view of the need for swift preparations were told by their friend the imperturbable Sub-Area Commandant that they could go ahead of anything on the road provided they did'nt pass the C-in-C.

On arrival back at Dimapur at about 5 P.M. on May 9th the C. T. L. L. O. found the Political Secretary of the Planting and Commerce Group, and the Chairman, Assam Branch Indian Tea Association, waiting for him. They were anxious about the safety of the labour in the forward areas in view of the sudden military deterioration, but were somewhat reassured by the news that the withdrawal of this labour was already in progress.

CHAPTER IV

In the meantime there were urgent requests for assistance from the I. T. A. for building a large reception camp at Kanglatombi, 18 miles north of Imphal, to receive the Burma army who were now coming through the new road after the gruelling retreat from the ill-fated Burma campaign, and to add to their troubles the weather had now broken. The I. T. A. immediately sent out an S. O. S. for all available tarpaulins from the Assam tea estates, and gave orders for the forward labour to move to Kanglatombi and start work on the camps as soon as possible.

An hour after midnight on May 10th/11th information was brought into the I. T. A. Headquarters that there had been a Jap bombing raid on the forward areas with fairly heavy casualties. It subsequently transpired that this was the first Imphal raid, and a convoy of about 50 I. T. A. labour on its way to Kanglatombi had been caught in it; this was the first experience by I. T. A. labour of bombing, and casualties were sixteen of whom eight were killed. A car containing some planters was hit and wrecked, but they had luckily jumped for an extremely insanitary slit trench a few seconds before. Though not a large raid judged by European standards it had a most amazingly demoralising effect on the civil population and services in Imphal and Dimapur, the former place particularly. The actual bomb damage was slight, as anti-personnel bombs only were used, but the prisoners from the Imphal jail escaped in the confusion and, after reinforcing their ranks from local volunteers, embarked on a campaign of loot and then destroying the evidence by arson. No house or property was safe and local P. W. D. officers had their quarters completely stripped while they were at work, so that they had nothing except the clothes they stood up in and were suddenly in a quandary for food of any description. Imphal was described as a city of the dead with all public services non-existent; corpses on the road were left unattended and the stench from these rapidly became unbearable; and through all this the refugees and the Burma army personnel continued to stream in increasing numbers.

In the meantime Dimapur was experiencing a similar state of demoralization. Postal, railway, and civil medical staff, absconded, and these services came to a standstill. The I. T. A. transport was "frozen" by drivers absconding and taking the switch keys of the lorries with them, while suspicions of sabotage were aroused by many cases of obviously intentional shorting of batteries. To maintain this state of tension, if it were necessary, there were frequent air raid alarms and Jap recce planes flying low over the Dimapur base, while Imphal was raided again a few days later, and at the former place an over-enthusiastic army officer took the trouble to visit the labour camps working on the road and, without any reference to the planters in charge, told the Indian staff and labour that anyone near the road was liable to be bombed out of existence. Luckily for this junior officer's self respect, the planters were unable to find him subsequently and it is possible that his seniors arranged a speedy transfer to another theatre.

The Imphal and Forward areas group, now withdrawn to Kanglatombi, went through a most difficult period; their transport was similarly immobilised, and any that could be put on the road was liable to seizure, unless driven by a European, by refugees and stragglers from the army. After the bombing casualties and amidst completely demoralised surroundings it was to the credit of all concerned that the I. T. A. labour stood fast at Kanglatombi and completed the reception camp for the army who were now all out from Burma.

Just about this time the C. T. L. L. O. called on the Sub-Area Commandant for discussion and was invited to have tea in the mess. The Brigadier showed him to a place at a table and turning to a tired looking man opposite said:

"General, may I introduce the Indian Tea Association's Chief Liaison officer?"

This was General (Later Field Marshal) Alexander, who had come out with the last of his troops from a long and dispiriting campaign, but whose star was destined to ascend to the heights in the latter stages of the war.

By the end of the third week of May 1942 the I. T. A. had completed their mission of providing labour for

the escape route from Burma, for the roads and installations at Dimapur Base, and for making camps to accommodate the army as it came out. The planters and labour had come on a short term basis at literally as moment's notice, and lived under most primitive conditions resulting in a great strain on their physical reserves. It had been a time of tremendrous stress and strain for all, with fresh problems of a hitherto unimagined magnitude turning up hourly. One worked desperately to set in motion their solution, and as often as not, as soon as the fresh orders had been issued, the situation completely changed (generally for the worse), necessitating cancelling all previous orders and working out a fresh solution. The only method of sending out these orders was by runner in one of our precious light transport vehicles as there was no post or telegraphic service between the base and the forward areas. This stress and strain had applied equally to the R. E's and the Administrative Staffs; like us they were definitely "played out". Luckily however the Japs evidently were too, as they made no effort to press forward beyond Tammu, although at that time there was nothing to stop them from occupying the whole of Assam with its rich resources in rice, oil, tea, coal, timber, and cattle. Two years later they were to make an all-out attempt at this, which started off with a considerable measure of success and was only halted on the very fringe of these rich prizes.

The "different and even more important role" for the road from Burma to Assam forecast by General Wood at his secret conference on March 8th had now been fulfilled, and plans were already being made to revert to the original idea of building up communications and the necessary stores and base from which to launch a "come-back" in Burma, and for this the rains, which had already broken, promised some respite from the Jap though adding to the problems of construction.

Labour was now returned to their gardens to recuperate and, where possible, planters were given short leave to their estates to re-fit in preparation for the next and longer phase, a very necessary step as most of them on leaving their estates had packed up bare essentials only and left at 12 hours notice. Health conditions were also poor, and although the I. T. A. Medical service had kept their sick rate down to 5% against a local average of 50%, malaria, dysentry, and ill effects from exposure

were beginning to creep in, and many planters suffered from these in varying degrees. Their chief concern however was for their labour, and they brought these down to the base, handed over records, paid them off, and saw them on the train, before reporting sick themselves.

The C. T. L. L. O. concluded his official report on this phase to the Calcutta Committee as follows:—

> "In several individual reports high praise is paid to the Tea Garden labourer, and this is his full due. This praise at the same time reflects the genuine respect which the good planter has for good labour and the mutual confidence that results from this. It was this latter quality that enabled the tea labour to stand fast when first a stream of refugees was pouring through them, and later an army in retreat. It was a great honour to command these men."

CHAPTER V

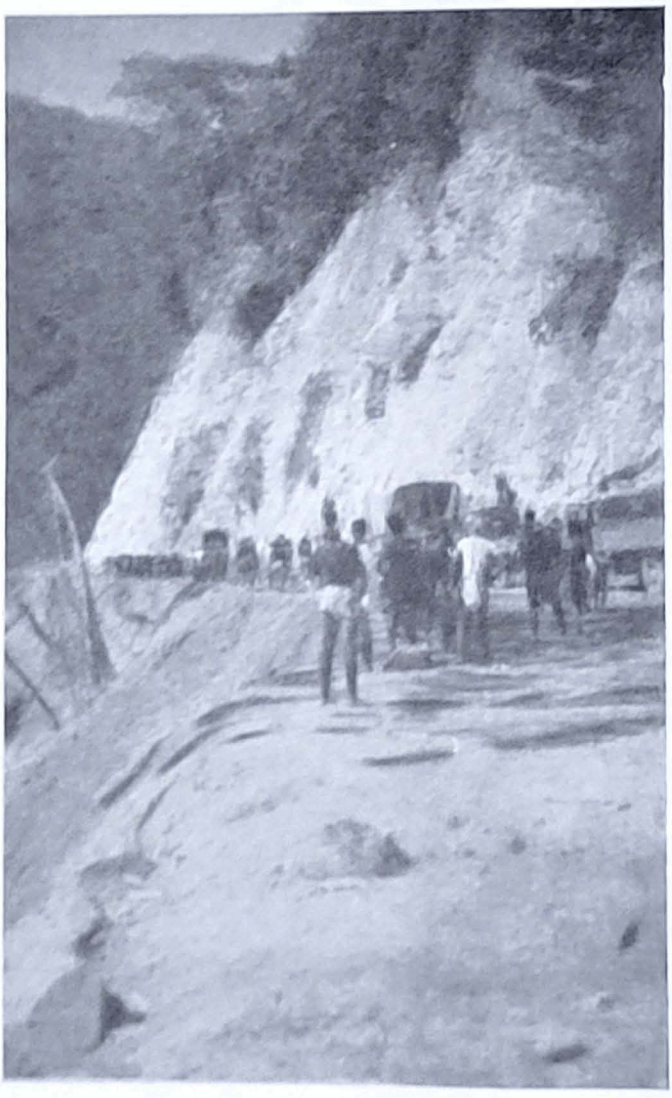
Towards the end of May the Indian Tea Association were asked to supply a maintenance force of 15,000 to 20,000 labour on the road from Numaligarh to Mao, 122 miles approximately, and to this they agreed subject to sanction from G. H. Q. Delhi, who had only authorised them officially to supply labour for the first phase. There was some delay before the formal sanction came through, and the planters used this to good purpose by building camp sites for the expected labour. It should be stressed that while extremely primitive bivouac conditions had been adopted in Project 1, which occurred mostly in the dry season, to have expected labour or Europeans to remain healthy under these same conditions during the monsoon would have been quite out of the question, and it was essential that for the extended period for which the I. T. A. labour would now obviously be required, a general improvement in living conditions be effected. Labour had slept on the ground in Project 1, but in the monsoon or Project 2 from June onwards this was obviously quite impossible, and the same applied to the planters themselves.

Weatherproof shelters were therefore built of bamboos and tarpaulins, with raised floors to sleep on, and the labour moved into these during the early part of June, the first drafts being concentrated within a radius of about 9 miles of Dimapur Base.

In the early part of June a change occurred in the army administration, and General Wood handed over the Eastern Frontier Communications (whose title was now to lapse) to 4th Corps under command of Lt. General N. Irwin. General Wood had had an extremely difficult mission, and the I. T. A. will always regard him with gratitude and affection; his command had been an essentially Lines-of-Communication one, and there was some consolation that the succeeding command was a combatant one. Altogether there was a general re-shuffle during June, and the Assam "V" Force was formed as a sort of Commando unit into which several of the planters who had served on Project 1 now went as officers.

The rains had now broken and the road from Dimapur to Imphal started to give an exhibition of what a hill road cut in

I. T. A. Labour clearing a "slip"



Widening the Gorge

treacherous strata can do during the monsoon. Any fall of rain was immediately followed by landslides which effectively blocked the road, but these minor mishaps were completely overshadowed by a whole hillside which slipped down at Mile 42,, 5 miles short of Kohima, about June 19th. At this point the road originally ran round a spur about 200 yards in depth; the whole spur started moving and water from above turned it into a bog in which a man was liable to sink. The whole hillside from about 500 feet above was moving and settling down into the valley 1,000 feet below. This resulted in the road forward of Mile 42 being completely isolated, and 4th Corps had their sole communication life line cut behind them, and even porterage across this gap was only possible in small and very tedious loads.

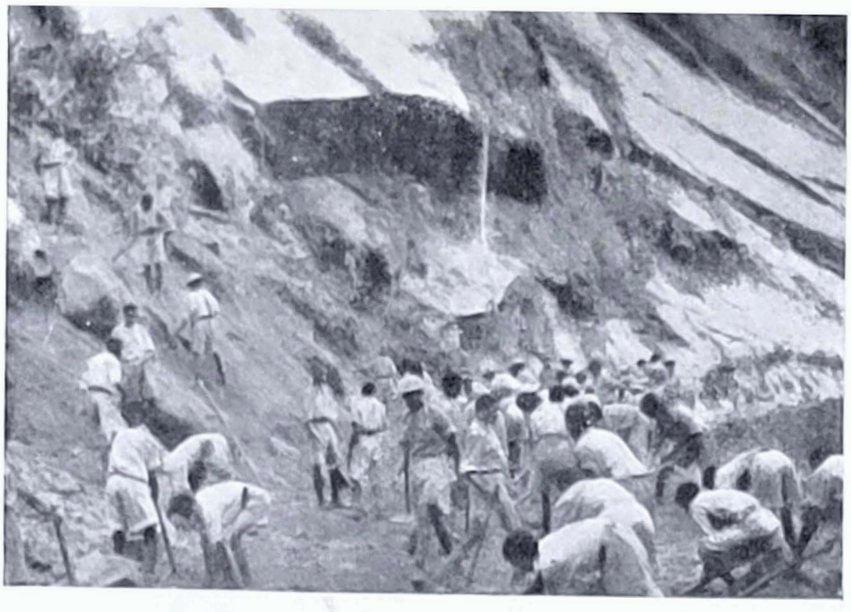
The Indian Tea Association, up to now employed at Base, had a sudden request on the evening of the 7th July to move 1,000 labour up to MS 42. The 8th and 9th were spent in preparing camp sites and on the 10th the labour moved in. The P. W. D. employing local Naga labour had been working here since the original landslide and, with the re-inforcement of the I. T. A. labour together with their seven planter supervisors, the road was opened again on the 12th July. The hillside however was still moving and any road across it usually subsided at the rate of about 3 feet an hour, which meant a maximum of about two hours during which light convoys could be rushed across; after this the road completely broke up and disappeared into the valley below. From July 12th therefore a daily new road had to be built across the swamp; work was done by gangs starting at dawn, the first mission was to rescue the corduroy planks from the remains of the previous days road down in the valley, after which a track was hacked out above road level to allow for subsidence during work. This was then stabilised with road metal, and finally the corduroy planks laid, by which time it was usually about 6 P.M. Waiting convoys were then rushed over until the road was no longer safe, after which work was shut down for the night.

The drive across was a considerable feat as there was an approach incline of approximately 1 in 9 with sharp corners and this on a slippery wooden plank surface with a road a bare 12 feet wide, and it was usually raining or a Scotch mist. Any lorry

skidding off the road of course completely blocked the track for that evening and meant a whole days work (and rations for the forward troops) lost. After the first day or two there was some excellent organization and the convoy passing over the "Slip" attracted a large audience and was rather reminiscent of a hill climb at home. Flood lamps lit the course, convoys were drawn up and waiting at either side, and a picked team of British drivers was detailed to pilot the lorries over; these made a careful recce on foot just before the road was opened, and the crowd sat up on the upper bank to watch proceedings. A British driver took over the leading vehicle from the Indian driver, the control officer blew his whistle and away the first lorry went. As soon as he was safely over the whistle went again as a signal for No. 2 vehicle, and in the meantime the driver of No. 1 had handed back to the Indian driver and the former was walking back to take his turn to pilot another lorry over. This went on for a period of anything from $\frac{3}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours depending on how fast the hillside was moving, and then the road was declared unsafe and work shut down for the night.

After three weeks of this the hillside seemed to stabilise and attempts were made to build a more permanent road. Concurrent with this however, slips and road blocks were a daily, and even more, nightly feature all along the road, and the resultant chaos and concentration of transport on a strictly single track road can well be imagined. The Gorge, between MS 10 and 14, was notorious for blocks and undoubtedly the most dangerous part of the road in wet weather as, without any warning, anything up to 100 tons of rock would crash down on the round. One night an I. T. A. lorry was held up in the Gorge with mechanical trouble; the driver conscientiously and wisely, as untended lorries were invariably cannibalised and stripped, went to sleep in his vehicle. During the night he was woken up by a small pebble falling on the cab, he immediately leapt out and ran, and was caught in the fringe of a rock fall which reduced his lorry to the thickness of a pancake and drove the wheels clean through the tarmac surface of the road, but thanks to his agility he escaped with broken ribs and collar bone only.

I. T. A. labour was working on the widening of the Gorge road but it was an Augean task as at that time there



Widening the Gorge

Bulldozer at work in the Gorge

Headquarter personalities at Zubra, Reading from left Wattam (Claims & Compensation Fraser (Accounts), Reid (Cashier).

was no mechanical equipment, explosives, or pneumatic drills, and all the work had to be laboriously done by hand, starting away up the cliff, cutting a ledge, and working down, and all this with the minimum interference with traffic. The monsoon had by now fully broken and its effects on the road were disastrous; road blocks caused by major and minor landslides were a daily occurrence, and the bulldozers of No. 1 Excavating Company were all worn out and unserviceable after their tremendous effort on the Pallel Tammu road. All these slips therefore had to be laboriously cleared by hand, and nearly all local labour was now diverted to sowing and planting their rice crops. The I. T. A. therefore were asked to fill the gap, and accordingly put in a chain of Camps up to Maram at Mile 80. In view of the forward movement, headquarters moved up to Zubza at Mile 36 on July 12th, but the main components such as "Q", Transport, and Reception, had to remain at railhead at Dimapur.

There was a further re-shuffle on the army side at this period; General Irwin took over charge of Eastern Command, while Lt. General Scoones took over 4th Corps with headquarters at Jorhat. Our old friend "Mike" Gilpin was transferred to Rawalpindi where, rumour had it, he expended a bobs worth of rubber off his tyres every time he stopped or started his motor scooter. His place as Chief Engineer, 4th Corps, was taken by Brigadier L. D. Grand or "Uncle" as he soon became affectionately known amongst the I. T. A.

The new Corps Commander and Chief Engineer lost no time in doing a tour of their forward areas, and the road at MS 42 held up to let them through, but on the 19th of August, following heavy rainfall, the whole hillside got on the move again and all convoys and traffic to the forward area were completely stopped resulting in the forward troops having to be put on half rations. The I. T. A. team at MS 42 had by now however some experience of dealing with moving mountains, and said that if the troops were on half rations they would work in shifts without stopping until the road was through again. As it is of course quite impossible to arrest a moving mountain, the only other course is to accelerate it, and this was effected by finding a stream up hill from the landslide

and diverting it into the moving glacier of mud. This washing process eventually carried all the mud away until the water found stable rock underneath, and by the 25th August the old original spur at MS 42 had become a sharp re-entrant under this process, but there was a much more solid foundation on which the road was permanently put through and remained until the end of the Burma campaign.

General Scoones returned from his forward tour on the 20th August and saw the "slip" at its worst; it was impossible to cross on foot as one immediately sank to the armpits, porterage was impossible, and the whole area was a moving quicksand. A plank track was laid ten minutes before the General was due to cross, and on this he escaped without going any deeper than his knees, but the track was gone twenty minutes later.

Brigadier Grand came down the next day and even his cheery optimism suffered a distinct check when he saw the slip. His first reaction was to do a few "sums" and "forward planning", but the slip was moving too fast even for his anticipation, and he eventually decided to leave it to the men on the spot. With his flair for getting a team going he nominated a local R. E. Major, the Superintending Engineer of the P. W. D., and the senior planter in charge of the labour at Mile 42, as a Committee of Works, and it was solely due to the efforts and close partnership of these three that the "slip" was opened again so quickly, and the much needed rations and stores for the troops went through. Characteristically the Brigadier wrote the I. T. A. a very pleasant letter congratulating them on their achievement.

Work on the road now definitely entered the second phase; in the period March to May life was just a frantic rush to get a road of some sort through to Burma, and the urgency of dealing with the day to day problems with a constantly changing situation left no time for any forward planning or long term policy. That emergency had now been surmounted and, with the breathing space in operations afforded by the monsoon, a definite and ordered programme of works began to take shape. The main feature of this was the doubling up in width of the whole road from Dimapur to Imphal which in practice meant increasing the rock ledge, which formed the road for the majority of the way,

Road Widening in 1955. The Weepign Wall

from 12 feet wide to 24. The immensity of this task over 133 miles with little or no mechanical equipment beggars description, particularly when it is realised that no part of the road ever seemed static, and subsidences, slips, and rock falls, were the order of the day, the keeping open of which must at all times have first priority. Just as in Project 1 however Brigadier Mike Gilpin's drive and personality put the road through in time, in Project 2 Brigadier "Uncle" Grand's leadership and powers of organization reduced the problem to a mathematical sum, and the planters learnt a new language of man days, ton miles, and figures of rock and earth to be shifted in astronomical terms of cubic feet.

There was also a tendency, as the army discovered his experience and capabilities in this kind of work, to put much more responsibility on the planters, and to utilise them as Engineer Officers rather than Officers in charge of Labour Battalions, and this resulted in a marked increase in the output of the work. As the work proceeded this idea was expanded more and more with excellent results, and the I. T. A. even provided its own team of rock blasters, who did the majority of the blasting on the rock faces, employing ordinary tea garden labour to place and fire the charges, and this was done throughout the Project without any accidents.

In September 1942 with the end of the monsoon in sight Brigadier Grand included in his plans for the coming dry winter season a cut and dried estimate of what he would require in terms of I. T. A. labour for the work and, in company with three senior planters from Assam, flew to Calcutta to place these requirements before the Calcutta Committee.

From the beginning of 1942 onwards the Tea Industry had two main objects, each of the highest priority and inevitably competitive; there was the obvious one of giving the maximum assistance to the army in the defences of North East India, and the less apparent one of producing the largest possible tea crop from India. The latter was continually being stressed by the Food Ministry in London, and the need for this arose from the loss of the large tea producing areas in the Dutch East Indies, the destruction of tea stocks in London by air raids, and the fact that tea had been found to be the finest palliative for civilians exposed to incessant bombing. The ration had already been

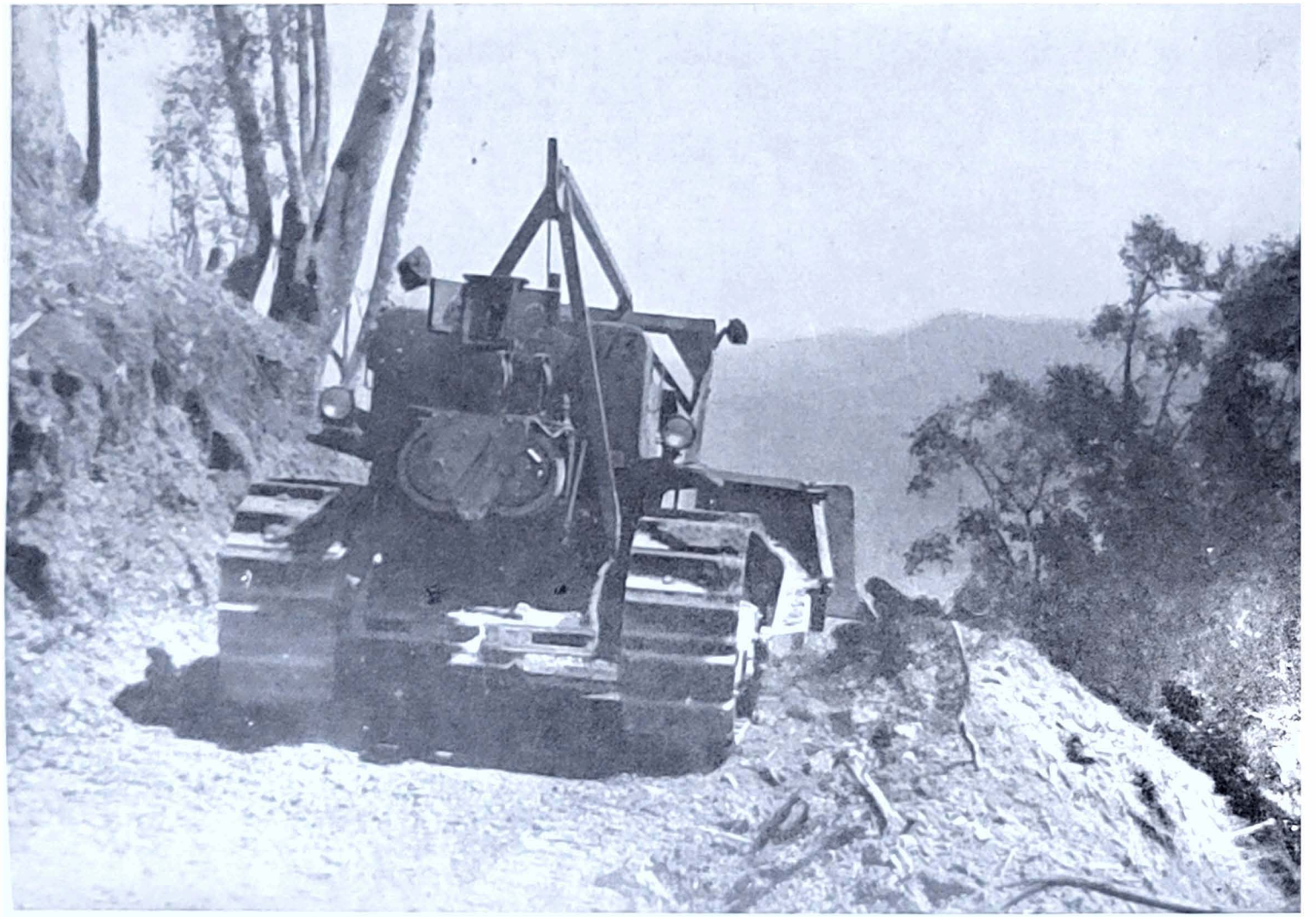
reduced to 2 ozs. per week, and the Food Ministry was frankly apprehensive of the moral effect of any further reduction.

Up to date circumstances had necessarily resulted in the army's labour requirements from the I. T. A. being submitted in a telegram asking for immediate fulfilment, and as the labour wanted was never less than four figures and in many cases had to be despatched from anything up to 500 miles away, the strain on organization was considerable, while the production of this at a moments notice often resulted in loss or wastage of man power.

Brigadier Grand now placed before the Committee an estimate of his labour requirements at each particular site, and this estimate was thereafter submitted monthly to cover the next three months, and what became known as the "Shadow Force Labour Scheme" was then evolved. Under this, every tea estate in North East India undertook an obligation to supply labour for military projects at an assessment of one labourer for every ten acres of the estate, and retained the right to recruit this number at Government expense through the Tea Industry's own recruiting organization. By no means all estates exercised this right, but it provided a remedy for those estates which could not otherwise have stood the heavy drain on their working labour force which this contribution entailed, and the Shadow Force Labour Scheme continued until the final close of Projects at the end of 1945. Under it the Industry undertook to supply to all projects (*i.e.*, not only roads, such as Manipur and Ledo, but also the airfields, stone quarries, and installations all over Assam, and latterly the Americans too) a force of 50,000. In practice however it maintained a steady force of between 75,000 and 90,000, although it only recruited some 25,000 at Government expense.

This Calcutta conference was a milestone in the I. T. A. labour supply and enabled a cut and dried programme to be arranged, while the army was assured of their requirements being fulfilled.

In all these arrangements the I. T. A. had the greatest assistance from the Labour Directorate at G. H. Q. under Brigadier Radley, who to everyone's regret was subsequently killed in an air crash while on his way to attend a conference.



Bulldozer on the Kohima...Bokajan Road

CHAPTER VI

The Indian Tea Association's territory and commitments at Manipur Road now became considerably extended again and, in addition to the actual widening of the road, included the Dimapur and Imphal airfields and two entirely new roads in the hills. One of these latter was known as the "Slip Bypass" to provide an alternative route to the troublesome slip at MS 42, and the other as the "Kohima—Bokajan road"; this latter ran roughly parallel, though on a separate range of hills, to the Kohima—Dimapur road and was about 50 miles long. The Bypass cut out from the existing Kohima—Dimapur road some seven miles short of Kohima, went straight up the hillside in a series of zig-zags, passed above the infamous "Slip" basin, and then rejoined the main road again about three miles short of Kohima. From a play on the names of the planters who worked on this road, these two junctions with the main road were christened "Lancaster Gate" and "Paternoster Row", and we were to hear these names mentioned a year later in the B. B. C. News during the critical phase of the battle of Kohima.

Shortly before these roads were started the I. T. A. were asked to construct camouflaged staging camps at about 15 miles intervals along the road from Dimapur to Kohima, and it was emphasised that this construction had a very high priority and must all be kept very hush-hush. Soon after these had been completed a senior planter, while on inspection tour of the work on the road, was held up for a few minutes about ten miles short of Kohima while a bulldozer cleared away the "spoil" from a shale face that the tea labour was working on. A staff car was also held up and a short, but tough looking, Brigadier jumped out, rapidly took in the whole scene, and then focussed a purposeful look on the planter, who responded by walking over to him.

"Good morning, sir."

"Hm. Good morning. Are you in charge of this work?"

"Yes, sir."

"How long have you been on this job?"

"About nine months, sir."

"Hm. Well it all looks pretty unsatisfactory."

From his 6′ 1″ odd the planter gave the Brigadier an ingenuous look.

"Do you know the road well, sir?"

"Oh, I've been up as far as Kohima."

"Well in the monsoon our chief problem was to keep a road here at all."

"Oh, yes, I know. But the whole trouble is of course that the British are the worst road builders in the world. Now what exactly are you supposed to be doing?"

"Our specification is to build a road 24′ wide, sir."

"Exactly, absolutely useless. Now if the Italians or the Germans had been building this road, they would'nt have bothered with a wretched 24′, they'd have built a 60′ one and made a job of it. See that hillside over there, cut the whole thing off. There's no problem at all if you tackle it in the right way."

"Have you seen any of these hillsides when the whole thing is on the move?"

"Oh, yes, I know. I heard there was a little bit of trouble at one place and the Sappers made a lot of excuses about it, but there's no problem at all if only you'd tackle it the right way." The ingenuous look on the planters face deepened.

"Well, as a matter of fact, sir, we are not responsible for the technical direction of this work. The Chief Engineer, 4th Corps, Brigadier Grand gives us that. Have you met him? I'm sure he'd be most interested in your views."

The little Brigadier paused and looked the planter up and down. "Well, I think I must be getting along. Cheer-oh."

And that was Wingate, the man who was to become world famous, whose brilliance and tenacity of purpose were to write a new chapter in military operations, and who was then on his way in to his first thrust into Burma, which was to lay the foundations for the eventual reconquest. Wingate would probably have succeeded in getting all the necessary mechanical equipment from G. H. Q. to make a magnificent 60′ road, but, alas, we were only mortal and had failed, so pretty well all the work had to be done by hand.

Pilcher and Shaw at latter's camp

The staging camps previously mentioned were of course for his Chindits, whom we saw plodding along the road in small parties in which there was always the incongruous sight of a British tommy leading by a string a large white bullock in shafts and harnessed to a ridiculously small two wheeled cart about the size of a perambulator.

With the end of the monsoon the period following was essentially one of consolidation, improvement, and rationalization of work; improvement of camp quarters and general living conditions, and above all consolidation of the already excellent relations between the army and the I. T. A. There was a very healthy spirit of give and take on either side, encouraged to the utmost by "Uncle" Grand, and each side was always ready to give the other 100% officially and another 50% "off the record". Planters kept open house in their camps to all passing army personnel, who ranged from G. H. Q. Generals to local Other Ranks; on the other side planters were made to feel very welcome guests at all unit Messes, and the various administrative staffs were invariably accessible and most helpful on all official occasions.

Large hospitals were now being made near Kohima, and the army Medical Officers formed a small convention which met weekly for dinner and for one of its members to read a paper on some medical topics of interest. It was a great compliment that this convention elected as its President the planters' doctor from the I. T. A. Camps near by - a courteous though well merited choice in view of his seniority and reputation in Assam.

Other firm friends of the I. T. A. were the Military Police on duty at the Traffic Control Posts. On one occasion a planter, proceeding from Dimapur, found a long queue of vehicles drawn up in front of a closed gate at Nichuguard. The planter drove up to the head of the column and in passing noticed that the leading vehicle was a station wagon containing Brass Hats. The M. P. Corporal came out from his Post.

"Are you in a hurry, sir, "

"Yes, I am rather."

"Well thats alright, sir, we can let you through, only go carefully as they are blasting on the road."

The gate opened to let the planters car through and was closed immediately afterwards. After inspecting the work in progress the the planter was held up again some time later further on up the road, and the same station wagon pulled in behind him. A cheerful looking Brigadier, with the G. H. Q. armband on, stepped out and gave a welcoming smile to the planter, who went up to pass the time of day:

"I'm afraid I pulled a quick one on you, sir, at the Nichuguard Gate when they let me through."
The Brigadier chuckled.

"Oh, were you the blighter in the red car whom they let through? Well, thats alright, but what I want to know is, what the hell's the secret password on this road?"

His Staff Captain, whose duty it was to know everything, replied: "I. T. A. sir, I heard him say it."

It was not really quite such favouritism as it sounded, as when the traffic was stopped for "works" it was obviously the planters job to supervise them, and for this they had special dispensation.

Altogether during this period of autumn 1942 to early 1943 there were cheering signs on the road; frequent visits of G. H. Q. Brass Hats, considerable troop movements, vast quantities of stores including boats going forward, and a general air of optimism and expectancy, though as it turned out subsequently the latter were not yet justified.

The doubling up of the road was going ahead well, and several sections had a near-completion look about them. The Gorge of course was the most tedious job, but the I. T. A. "Blasters" were leaving their mark on the landscape there, although it was more or less impossible to do any contiuous work without interrupting the flow of traffic. Eventually a compromise was reached and the road was declared definitely closed for "works" between certain hours while construction had priority, and then open for certain hours while convoys had priority. Unfortunately though, while it was easy enough to start rockfalls, it was a very different matter to stop them, and after blasting had ceased and the road was cleared for traffic, a few

The birth of a road

A "works priority" period on the Road

tons of rock loosened by the blasting would suddenly decide they had been left behind, and come crashing down on the fairway.

It was during one of these periods that the Corps Commander made his appearance on a tour up forward and was told that the road would be open in five minutes. While he was waiting, a tremendous cascade of rock came down just ahead or him, and the General was apologetically told that it would take about two hours to clear. He accepted this with cheerful, but nevertheless descriptive, comment, and in due course the road was cleared and he went on his way. Two or three days later a convoy of troops passing through the George was held up for five minutes or so while the road was cleared, and a Colonel introduced himself to the planter in charge of the work:

"I say, I've got a Welsh miner in my outfit who's an expert and he says you're doing this job the wrong way; instead of cutting down from above, you ought to undercut from below and you'll get double the work done in half the time."

"Yes, sir, I know, and you should just hear what the Corps Commander says when we do it that way."

At another time Brigadier "Uncle" Grand was inspecting the work, and pointing to a place where the road was about 40 feet wide said:

"Now, *why*, when you are told to make a 24 foot road, do you want to make it as wide as that?"

"Well, sir, at least 16 feet of that on the khud side is loose earth and spoil, and on principle we don't count the spoil."

"Hm. I see. Well, have you ever heard the story of the French Baron?"

"No, sir."

"Well he had no principles."

However inspite of principles or lack of them, the widening of the road made good progress, and early in January 1943 it was opened for two way traffic under an excellently organised system of Traffic Control Posts every ten miles with their own telephone system. One has heard a lot about the Stillwell Road and our

American friends with their much more modern ideas of publicity wrote some very interesting and well illustrated articles about it. A senior American Engineer Officer from the Stilwell Road said he heard the British were building a road at Manipur, and he guessed he would like to have a look at it. With typical American generosity he made the following comment on the Manipur Road:

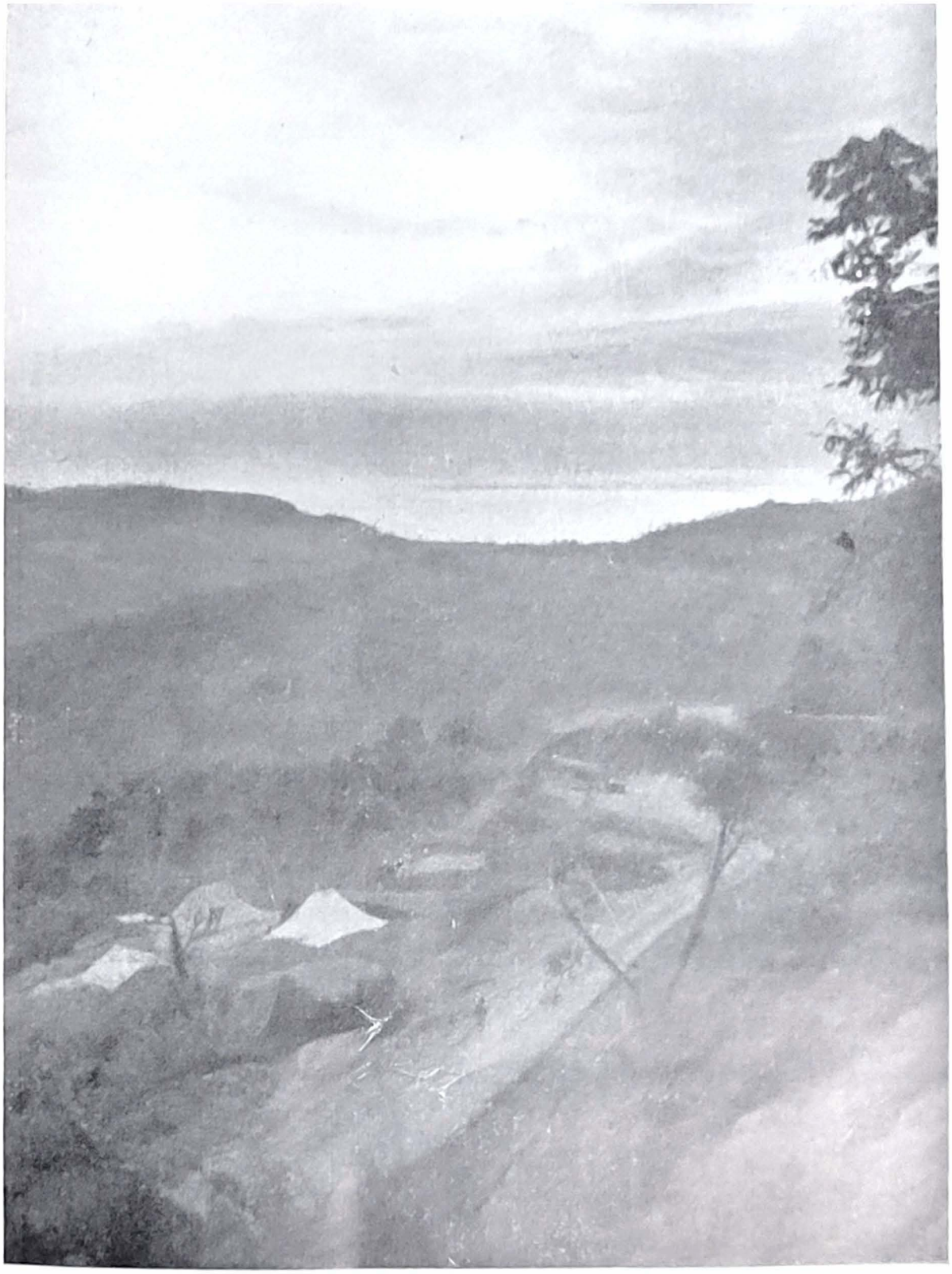
"Well, we reckoned we had built a road at Ledo, but this is n't a road—its a highway."

And with its tar macadam surface, neat edging, and line of white washed posts demarcating the khud side, one could feel that the compliment was justified, while the steady stream of convoys running throughout the 24 hours gave a further feeling of confidence.

Shortly after this the I. T. A. forward camps moved up to Imphal to work on the airfield, the surface of which was breaking up and needed immediate repairs as this was the only field at that time supplying fighter cover to our forward troops. In the meantime a project was afoot to build a road from Imphal to Tiddim in the Chin Hills due south of Imphal, and then on to Fort White. Army combatant units had already made a start on this and got as far as the Manipur River at mile 110 south from Imphal, but the most difficult stretch was ahead where the road was to claw its way up to Kennedy Peak Range and then along the 11,000 feet ridge.

The I. T. A. were invited to study the possibilities of this and early in May two planters went out to do the preliminary reconnaisance. The country after leaving the Imphal Plain is surely the most beautiful in India, woodland, oaks, and undulating pasture to start with, and then becoming more severe as one started to climb up the valleys which were at that time of the year a mass of orchids. To the east a rugged and forbidding range of mountains abruptly walled one in, and this was the famous range that the new road was intended to climb up and over.

There were other objects of interest though besides orchids and mountains, and a certain northward movement of troops was



The Manipur Highway

obvious and caused some speculation. These movements northwards were always objects of suspicion after our unhappy experience in May 1942 when all the world seemed to be moving away from the Jap. As it subsequently turned out, in this case it was not a good omen as the Jap had made a thrust and succeeded in cutting the road by the Manipur river about a 100 miles south of Imphal.

A point that should be emphasised throughout the whole history of the campaign is that the Dimapur—Imphal—Tammu road, and the Imphal—Tiddim track, both ran obliquely behind the line of posts we were holding. It was the only land supply route to the whole front which ran roughly N. E.—S. W., while communications ran north and south. Any bold thrust by the Jap therefore, particularly in the N. E. sector, was liable to isolate the S. W. sector, and this of course is what subsequently happened in the battle of Manipur a year later.

4th Corps Headquarters was now (April, May 1943) in the outskirts of Imphal which was rapidly being built up as an advanced Base. All sorts of interesting people came and went though these were never discussed, and one was well advised to be dumb. Amongst the many visitors from the Commander-in-Chief downwards however probably one of the most spectacular was a Junior officer of magnificent physique and walnut complexion set off by a long black beard who at first sight was taken for a Sikh. On closer inspection however he turned out to be a Britisher, probably from the Chindits or V Force, in to report from deep patrolling in enemy occupied territory in Burma.

The Indian Tea Association's forward movement continued and we moved south again to our old territory on the Pallel—Tammu road. In addition to roads however, rather more emphasis appeared to be laid on airfields, and a considerable amount of our labour was employed on the Dimapur, Imphal, and Pallel fields, while a new one was started at Tollyhul due south of Imphal. From this latter Wingate's second airborne invasion of Burma was launched to the Aberdeen and Broadway landing strips in the Burma jungle..

The dry winter season of 1942—1943 was now drawing to a close, and even the optimistic speculators had to admit that the

chances of the long awaited thrust being delivered before the autumn seemed slender. Any offensive activity on our part seemed to have been confined to the Arakan Front, away south west of ours, and that seemed to give small grounds for optimism, as after a winters campaign the final positions showed small change, and indeed at times the situation there had caused anxious moments.

We now know that the unfortunate Burma Front had time and time again to forego promised and long overdue equipment to the Middle East and Sicily campaigns.

The rains of 1943 therefore were again spent in the old terrain from Dimapur to Tammu, the Tiddim venture having been abandoned after the Jap thrust to the Manipur river. In view of the extended lines over which the Indian Tea Association were now working, 200 miles of difficult though by now greatly improved road, a forward headquarters was set up at MS 82, Maram. Rear HQ continued at Zubza at MS 37, while Reception, Transport, and stores remained at railhead at Dimapur.

Zubza was only 10 miles away from Kohima, the headquarters of the Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills, C. R. Pawsey, I.C.S. Although this is a record of the I. T. A. part in the Manipur campaign no account from whatever angle would be complete without a reference to Charles Pawsey, whose name will live for generations in the Naga Hills. As the civil representative in that area there were many contacts between him and the I. T. A. and on all occasions no one could have been more helpful or accessible, and he endeared himself to all. Personal charm and administrative ability were not however his only attributes, and he was later to show in the critical battle of Kohima that his courage and sense of duty were also of the highest. He was awarded the C.I.E. and the C.S.I. during this campaign, and surely few honours were so well earned.

The monsoon of 1943 had now broken and all hopes for an offensive had to be postponed, the build-up however continued, and, sure sign of a battle in prospect, large hospitals were built at various centres along the road, while masses of material continued to pour up it towards and beyond Imphal.

Autumn however saw no offensive start and once again we had a feeling of hope long delayed. As somewhat of an anti-climax indeed Jap patrols were reported active south of the Lokchao river between Pallel and Tammu, and all labour units were withdrawn at one time to north of the river.

This did not seem quite the news we had hoped for, and in February the Jap offensive in Arakan was launched with considerable initial success, and once again the situation here became decidedly "fluid". The famous battle of the "Arakan Box" was fought and provided for the British a useful dress rehearsal for the next and even more decisive phase of the campaign.

CHAPTER VII

To understand the full implications of the next phase it is necessary to get a mental picture of the Assam Valley, through which the Brahmaputra river flows west. It is bounded on the north by impenetrable jungle and the foot-hills of the Himalayan Range, and on the south by a chain of mountains stretching from the Patkoi range at the north eastern end, *via* the Naga and Manipur Hills, to the Khasi and Jaintia Hills at the south western, or entrance end.

There is therefore a solid chain of mountains to both the north and south east of the valley, which averages about 50 miles in width, and in shape may be compared to a pistol with the muzzle pointing across the extreme northern tip of Burma to China. The Brahmaputra follows the upper outline of the pistol, the under side of which is facing towards the Jap, and the river is unbridged throughout its length. The single track railway line makes its entrance to the valley across a ferry at the small of the butt, and soon after leaving the river crossing bears away south to form the trigger guard, in which are situated an isolated group of hills, while the Brahmaputra and solitary trunk road pass to the north of these hills.

Manipur Road station is at Dimapur about $\frac{3}{4}$ way round the trigger guard, and from here the road to Imphal cuts off south. Following the outline of the pistol the railway verges north again and rejoins the general line of the barrel some sixty miles from Manipur Road.

Along the barrel, and thickly concentrated towards the muzzle end, were the chain of airfields operated by the Americans from which they were shooting over the notorious Hump vast quantities of supplies and equipment to China by air, while from the muzzle end itself the Ledo Road dropped away south as the only land connection with China.

Both the Americans and also Chinese therefore were dependent on the British guard of their long lines of communications, and the relative position of Imphal was south of the trigger guard.

By the same token an enemy outbreak west from this point could strike into the butt of the pistol, isolate Assam, and cut the Americans L. of C, and all aid to China with it.

The Tiddim Road. Red Cross vehicle in distress

The Japs first move was a thrust south of Imphal, cutting the Tiddim road again, though this time much nearer Imphal. 17 Div. were holding this front with their only lifeline running nearly parallel to it. It was cut behind them, and they only narrowly escaped disaster by doing a swift withdrawal north to Imphal, and with heavy fighting cutting their way through the hold on their life line before the Japs had time to consolidate it properly.

The Indian Tea Association were at this time still employed on the whole length of the Dimapur--Imphal—Pallel—Lokchao road, and this fighting took place to the west of them. All labour forward of Kohima suddenly had orders to evacuate within the next 24 hours, and transport for this sudden move was promised by the army. However in any sudden crisis transport must always be an unreliable factor and the army transport proved to be the same in this. By a stroke of luck the majority of the I. T. A's own transport was at that time in the forward area, and this was promptly switched to the withdrawal, which was done in a most orderly and efficient manner. There was no undue haste, yet had it been further delayed, haste would have been inevitable.

Great credit is due to the I. T. A. organization at H. Q. and Transport, specially to the Convoy leaders and drivers. The latter worked non-stop until the evacuation had been completed and preserved a detached attitude in the midst of rumours and wild speculation. From the very beginning of the Manipur Road Project the I. T. A. Transport had established a very high reputation for themselves, and in addition to filling to the full their numerous commitments on the Project itself, had undertaken at the same time considerable commitments outside in the shape of food supply to the evacuees, and transport of engineer stores for the army. It was their proud record that they always delivered the full goods and strictly on time. In this case it should further be recorded that food and stores were all evacuated, and the only articles left behind or lost were a few tarpaulins that would not survive dismantling.

On the 25th March nearly all labour had been moved north of Mile 9 from Dimapur, a few still remaining up to Mile 25. By this time the Jap had cut the Dimapur—Imphal road at about

Mile 91, and an armoured car that had been sent out to investigate did not return. 4th Corps was consequently isolated at Imphal.

At Kohima at Mile 47 there appeared a completely normal atmosphere. The Jap was in the distant but visible hills to the east, but no one appeared to attach any particular significance to this, and every one generally seemed very calm and collected.

For the next week there was little definite news, though in the first day or so of April the B. B. C. made a sudden and unexpected spurt up-to-date in reporting the Burma campaign by mentioning that Jap patrols were proceeding in the direction of Kohima, while in the Assam Valley there was considerable troop movement proceeding west in the direction of the trigger guard of the pistol.

By the afternoon of the 5th April it was known that Kohima had been isolated, and the road to Dimapur had been crossed by the Jap, while on the other side of Dimapur towards the Assam Valley the road was being threatened by further Jap patrols to the north, and in view of all the well-known Jap ruses all vehicles were subject to suspicion.

To obtain first hand information of the confused situation the Chairman and a senior Committee member of the Indian Tea Association had flown up from Calcutta, and were being driven towards Dimapur by the Secretary, together with the Chairman, of the Assam Branch in the former's car. They were all people of considerable literary achievement, and the Secretary's output in particular had a wide circulation. The sentries on the road though were no respecters of persons, and after being peremptorily stopped, they were glared at by one who, focussing his gaze on the Secretary, enquired whether anyone in the car spoke English. After the Secretary had however given a modest assurance the party was allowed to proceed.

The date was April 6th and one of the critical days. The Jap had obviously moved further, faster, and in greater numbers than had been anticipated. Kohima was cut off and Jap columns were proceeding down the valleys on either side of the Kohima—Dimapur road. Troops were being flown in from the Arakan by troop carriers landing on the Dimapur airfield, but a heavy

Planters on the Range. They kept their eye in in case of accidents. Left to right: Walker, Shaw, Lees

"Pop" Rutherford and D. S. Clark (left) overlook the road to Kohima, seen running along foot of distant hills across the valley. Severe fighting occurred in this area during the Kohima battle

thunderstorm each day for two or three days had resulted in the field being U. S..

In the meantime the pincer movement starting on Dimapur was causing some concern and, after considerable doubts and misgivings, it was decided to move the brigade from Kohima to counter the pincer movement on the Bokajan road which lay to the east of Dimapur. This left one battalion Royal West Kents and one battalion Assam Regiment to hold the defences of Kohima on which Jap pressure was becoming increasingly severe, and it seemed obvious that the taking of this road junction and strong tactical feature was the next step in the main Jap plan.

Now let us digress for a moment and follow the fortunes of the Assam Regiment up to this point. The Regiment was formed in 1940 or 1941 from local Assam Hill tribes, and officered by a strong proportion of ex-planters and Gurkha officers.

There was therefore a strong link between tea-planting interests and this regiment. This was strengthened by the fact that Shillong was the Depot and Training Centre, and we, in tea, had always followed the Regiment's record with interest.

When the Jap attack started in March, the Assam Regiment was holding a strong point at Jessami (see sketch map) in company with a Gurkha brigade. Events at Tiddim made the withdrawal of the Gurkhas to south of Imphal necessary, and the Assam Regiment was left to hold the fort at Jessami on its own. In the meantime Ukhrul fell to the Japs in an unexpectedly short time and they advanced on Jessami in overwhelming numbers. The Assam Regiment was rapidly surrounded and heavily outnumbered. All communication with their brigade H. Q. was cut off, and though the latter wished the Regiment to withdraw, no means could be found of getting the instructions through. In the meantime the Regiment stood firm in a grim battle.

After attempts to drop messages by air had failed, an Assam Regiment officer at Brigade Headquarters, *Lieut. Corlett, an ex-planter, volunteered to go out on his own, penetrate through the Jap ring, and give the Regiment the orders to retire on

* *Note.*—**Corlett was killed in subsequent fighting after being awarded the Military Cross.**

Kohima. This involved probably about a 30—40 mile journey through enemy country, and Corlett made it, though his most difficult job was to enter his own regiment's territory.

The regiment now prepared to withdraw and first had to cut their way out of the encircling ring. Having done this they had to withdraw through difficult country in possession of an enemy fully alive to their intentions.

After a succession of ambushes and resultant fighting, the regiment was eventually told to disperse into independent parties and make their own way back to rally at Kohima. This was successfully carried out, though casualties had not been light either during the original stand at Jessami or during the withdrawal to Kohima. *This then was the somewhat mauled but spirited force that was now called upon to share with the Royal West Kents the honours that subsequently went to the defenders of Kohima.

The situation here was pretty grim. The Jap was in possession of the town and all buildings, he was up on the surrounding heights and had cut the water supply. The Deputy Commissioner's Bungalow was a fiercely contested area in No Mans Land, and our small garrison, augmented by all available normal non-combatant troops, Sappers, etc., were in a small perimeter on a hill behind the Commissioners bungalow. The Jap could lob 3" and 4" mortars into them from commanding heights, and about the only thing in their favour was complete Allied command of the air. Water supply was by air dropping and the garrison was down to ½ pint per head per day.

After the withdrawal of the brigade the opinion was voiced that the Kohima garrison could not last longer than 24 hours. In the meantime every one watched the weather for a clear day or two that would allow the reinforcements for Kohima to arrive by air at Dimapur.

In the whole battle of Manipur our trump card was the complete mastery in the air and the use of the Assam airfields, not least among these being the Dimapur one, which was only started in October 1943, and at the time of the battle was an unsurfaced one with only a light dressing of shingle on it. That it stood up

* *Note.*—Lt. Col "Bruno" Brown was in command of the Assam Regiment. He got an "Immediate" award of the D. S. O. for Kohima, but was killed in subsequent fighting.

to carrier plane landings in thunderstorm weather was a tribute to its construction. Without these fields and air mastery Assam would undoubtedly have fallen and India possibly too, and we know now that the capture of Delhi and the whole of India was indeed the Jap intention.

At this time in Dimapur itself chief interest naturally centred on Kohima. We had news of the Jap columns advancing in their pincer movement on Dimapur, and also of stiff fighting at Kohima with an ominous statement one morning that: "owing to strong Jap pressure the perimeter had been further reduced and we had lost three 25 pounder guns." It turned out subsequently that these had not been lost, but knocked out; however to compensate for this we had sunny weather and a dry day, and the next morning were woken up at dawn by the welcome sound of a succession of planes low down and right overhead.

It was a wonderful sight to see the D. C. 3's and Commando planes coming in thick and fast, the next one touching down before its predecessor had completed its landing run, and transport all ready and waiting to whisk the disembarking troops up the line. One could breathe again.

In the meantime there were very reassuring signs on the road round Dimapur—guns—tanks, several varieties up to General Grants with their 75 m.m. gun,—armoured cars—Bren carriers, and troops, all proceeding in the right direction—up the road.

Prior to this period the defences of Dimapur had been hastily organised. Defensive "Boxes" were wired in, jungle cut to give a clear field of fire, and strong points and road blocks were made, in the construction of which the I. T. A. labour were employed. What we somewhat facetiously called the D. L. I. Dimapur Light Infantry) was formed from Pioneer and Labour Units to man the last defences on the foothills about 9 miles south of Dimapur. All other L of C units retired into their "boxes" at dusk and a strict curfew was enforced. In view of false alarms and itchy triggerfingers it was extremely inadvisable to venture out during curfew hours, even though one had an official pass and knew the pass-word.

Considerable attention was also focussed on the road north from Dimapur, the only outlet to this great base, as Jap patrols were known to be moving towards it, and although one did not

see much activity in the course of a normal journey along the road, if one ventured off the road into the jungle one promptly got challenged in no uncertain fashion.

We had one mild excitement during this period; one of the I. T. A. members was stopped from proceeding northwards with the curt information that the road was closed. On enquiring about trains he was informed that all trains were stopped, which meant that Dimapur had now become completely isolated. Naturally the railway line was watched with some interest in the interim, but some six hours later a train came through and the road was re-opened. It appeared that a convoy had been fired on while proceeding towards Dimapur the previous night.

Our strength was now obviously building up fast and the appearance and morale of the incoming troops gave great confidence.

At the time, to the layman at any rate, there appeared some pause between the arrival of the fresh troops and the long awaited news of offensive action; however in retrospect this is easy to understand as the success of the subsequent actions was achieved by tremendous outflanking movements carried out across almost impossible country by L. R. P. Troops (Long Range Penetration).

In the meantime the Royal West Kents and Assam Regiment had made a magnificent stand at Kohima in a delaying action that must have been the keystone of the campaign. A further invaluable factor during the battle of Manipur was the steadfastness of the local Naga Hill Tribes. Though the majority of their territory had been overrun, and they themselves were under the direct menace of the Jap, in no case did any local Quislings appear, and they maintained a most reliable and up-to-date information service to the British of Jap movements. This steadfastness undoubtedly owed much to the past administration and present leadership of Charles Pawsey, who remained at Kohima, his official headquarters, throughout the battle. His bungalow, official offices, and all except his bare personal effects, had been completely destroyed, but Pawsey remained in the foxholes of the Kohima "box", and shared with its defenders the chances of survival.

By about April 20th Kohima had been relieved and the whole position seemed much more secure, though the Jap was still astride the road from immediately south of Kohima to the fringes of the Imphal plain. The relief of Kohima was effected by 2 Div. of 33 Corps, it cost us hard and intensive fighting, but proved to be the turning point in a campaign that ended up with a smashing victory for us. 5 Div had been flown in to reinforce the Imphal garrison, while 7 Div and the 23rd Brigade were on the east of Kohima. From the dispositions shown in the sketch map it will be seen that the British had over six divisions engaged in this action, and even then it was a tough fight.

Though Kohima had been relieved, it was still a front line town, and a description of it on May 18th may be of interest. The road leading up to it had suffered surprisingly little damage, and it was possible to proceed by car to within about a mile of it. Although we had complete mastery of the air, this did not rule out an occasional tip and run raid by Jap Zero planes machine-gunning the road, and it was advisable to be on the lookout for these. The Jap ground troops were at that time holding Naga Village, about 1,500 yards east of the remains of the D.C's bungalow, and was in strength on the Aradura Spur about 2,000 yards south of Kohima, he was also strongly entrenched on the spur north east about 2,000 yards away overlooking Kohima and the road leading to it, and the general impression was that although the tide had been stopped, there was some very tough fighting ahead before communications with Imphal could be restored.

The Deputy Commissioners bungalow was a shambles, his compound a bloody and dirty battlefield. To the right of it as one approached, a blasted hillock covered with white patches was visible; this was the perimeter and the white patches were our parachutes used for dropping. Graveyards by the roadside bore witness to the heavy toll some of our units had paid, as did also derelict tanks and burnt out transport. Our own 5.5 inch shells were whining overhead and could be seen bursting in Naga Village, while a Jap mortar was pounding away at the D.C's bungalow and compound. In the midst of this there was a roar overhead and 12 Vengeance dive bombers came over at about 3000 –4000 feet. They circled over the ridge to the east and then "peeled off" in pairs to come down in a steep dive on the target. It was

possible at this distance to see the flash of their guns at work, and the bombs leaving their racks and then exploding as they hit the target. It was a fine sight and the chances of a speedy return journey to Imphal looked good.

After this events moved more swiftly than one could have hoped for, and the road to Imphal was re-opened on June 22nd, after which the old front soon became established.

It was fitting that the scene of the hardest fighting of all, the Deputy Commissioner's Bungalow compound, should be chosen as the site for the resting place of those who had made the supreme sacrifice. They lie in peace and quiet amidst surroundings that have now regained all their pre-war picturesqueness, and a most fitting tribute to their achievements has been erected in the shape of a large obelisk from local Naga stone, which was donated by the Nagas and carried by them to the cemetery. On this is inscribed :—

When you go home,
Tell them of us and say
For their to-morrow
We gave our to-day.

and this is the more than adequate reason for including in an account of the work of the Indian Tea Association the story of the heroism of our troops in the Kohima battle.

Bridge being launched over the Lokchao river. The first one was blown up before the Jap advance in 1942

CHAPTER VIII

With the re-opening of the road to Imphal at the end of June, the Indian Tea Association quickly took up their old territiory. Throughout the whole length of the road the Jap had done surprisingly little damage, but by the same token he had done no maintenance work, and in the monsoon period there was inevitably a rapid deterioration. However with the numbers employed, 30,000 odd, and under planters by now familiar with the road problems and their solution, the famous highway soon became its old self, and once again men, material, and armament poured up it.

Another venture in which the I. T. A. took part was the army vegetable farms. With the difficulties in transport, and the bottle neck of the single track railway supplying the whole of the Assam Burma front, it was obviously sound policy to exploit to the full local resources. Vegetable farms on a large scale had been cleared from the jungle before the 1944 Jap attack. These, though overrun by the Jap, had suffered little damage, and within a few weeks of the Jap retreat were going concerns again, and employed about 2,000 of the I. T. A. labour force.

Altogether the military situation cleared up in an amazingly swift fashion—much quicker than any of us had hoped for. We know now that it was achieved by tremendous outflanking moves across the Japs lines of communication, and though he had proved himself a very tough and fanatical fighter, after the first sign of his cracking he disintegrated rapidly, and the 4th and 33rd Corps succeeded in their object of not only beating, but also thoroughly destroying him.

With the onset of the cold weather of 1944-45 we were back on our old line, but with this difference, that the Allies were poised in strength for an attack while the Jap had lost four irreplacable divisions in the Manipur battle.

As far as the I. T. A. were concerned the last and most triumphant feature of their association with the Road was the hush-hush move of the Armoured Brigade through to

Burma in November 1941. It made the whole Project seem worth while, and although, like the battles in North Africa, the pendulum had swung each way, this time there was no doubt that it was swinging for the last time. There is of course a parallel between the two campaigns; in both communications were a night-mare, though the Assam Burma mountains were probably worse than the desert, which explains why the pendulum swings were limited to 200 miles against the even greater distances in the desert. For the final decisive battle of Manipur, the Allies strategy was to let the Jap come on and saddle himself with long lines of communication, while the Allies had shortened ones. However having enticed him into the trap, he turned out to be bigger than was expected, and there were anxious moments as to whether the trap would hold the catch. After the advance of the Armoured Brigade, the I. T. A's direct contact with combatant troops ceased as the battle for Burma receded further south with each allied success. The Road however was still the main and only land artery to the advance on Rangoon, and was in full use as such until Rangoon Port was recaptured and restored.

This is the story of the Manipur Road I. T. A. Project. It was only one of the many Projects run in Assam and North East Bengal by the Indian Tea Association and each played their part in the final defeat of the Jap.

Manipur Road was started as the building of a Base in 1942 from which to attack and defeat the Jap. As the situation in 1942 deteriorated, it was switched to becoming the escape route for our beaten forces, rather in the same fashion as Dunkirk. It then reverted to its previous role, but when all were waiting for attack, it suddenly became attacked itself in no uncertain fashion, and it seemed a toss up whether the big Dimapur Base with its masses of material would fall to the Jap.

But finally, after two and a half years of changing fortunes, it played to the full the part for which it had been intended originally, and was the springboard for the big attack on Burma.

We started off at the small wayside station of Manipur Road in March 1942, and the adjacent Indian village of Dimapur. Three years later in March 1945 Dimapur was an unrecognisable place; it had sprung up into a large Advanced Base, complete

with masses of material, an airfield, large hospitals, a Garrison Theatre, a Church, Canteen, Officers Shop, and all the installations, transit camps, etc., ancillary to a large base in modern warfare. Geographically it had been changed from a mosquito infested swamp to a reasonably hygenic military station. In the thousand and one jobs connected with this metamorphosis the Indian Tea Association labour had played its full part. It had been an enjoyable part because it had been a really worth-while job in which all branches and ranks of the army had shown a deep appreciation of our efforts, and had made us feel that we were honorary "Navvies" to the famous 14th Army.

PLANTERS WHO WORKED ON THE MANIPUR ROAD.

NAME	PROJECT			PERIOD ON PROJECT.
Alexander J. C. ...	Manipur Road			28 10-42 — 13-1-43
Alexander J. H. ...	,,	,,		6-10-42 — 6-1-43
Allan P. ...	,,	,,		9-3-42 — 6-9-44
Anderson N. ...	,,	,,		16-3-42 —23-10-42
Andrews H. C. ...	,,	,,		12-3-42 — 26-6-42
Archer N. H. ...	,,	,,		15-3-42 — 1-5-42
Bain R. W. ...	,,	,,		15-4-42 — 26-8-42
Balfour P. S. K ...	,,	,,		3-6-42 — 4-8-44
Ballantyne K. C. ...	,,	,,		9-2-43 — 27-7-43
Barron G. H. ..	,,	,,		13-3-42 — 24-4-43
Bell H. S. ...	,,	,,		26-3 42 — 5-5 42
Benton S F. ...	,,	,,	H. Q.	19-5-42 — 6-6-42
Betten M. M. ...	,,	,,		6-11-42 — 29-3-43
Blair A. ...	,,	,,		15-11-43 — 16-4-44
Blennerhasset F. W. ...	,,	,,		2-3-42 — 30-5-42
Branson W. P. G. ...	,,	,,		26-3-42 — 30-5-42
Brooke P. H. ...	,,	,,		23-3-42 — 11-8-42
Brown V. ...	,,	,,		23-3-42 — 26-5-42
Bruce J. D. ...	,,	,,		2-10-42 — 17-6-43
Channing-Pearce F. ...	,,	,,		15-4-42 — 4-1-43
Clark J. ...	,,	,,		17-3-42 — 19-7-42
Collard H. S. ...	,,	,,		13-4-42 — 10-9-42
Collins J. W., M.B.E. ...	,,	,,		22-10-42 — 27-8-43
Coutts A. A. ...	,,	,,		2-3-42 — 25-9-42
Crabb J. H. ...	,,	,,		14-4-42 — 26-9-42
Crerar A. N. ...	,,	,,		25-4-42 —21-11-42
Cumming R. J. ...	,,	,,		26-3-42 —23-12-42
Dodd C. E. ...	,,	,,		14-3-43 — 10-5-42
Dominy J. H. ...	,,	,,		2-2-43 — 30-8-43
Duff W. L. ...	,,	,,		18-3-42 — 16-4-42
Duncan A. B. ...	,,	,,		20-9-43 —15-12-43
Duncan W. G. G. ...	,,	,,		16-3-42 — 31-5-43
Dundas R. H. B. ...	,,	,,		7-3-42 —30-10-42
Evans F. W. H. ...	,,	,,		31-7-43 — 15-1-44
Ferrier G. A. ...	,,	,,		26-3-42 — 13-6-42
Fitzgerald H. ...	,,	,,		4-12-42 — 10-2-43
Fitt H. ...	,,	,,		7-11-42 — 6-8-43
Flemming H. G. ...	,,	,,		27-4-42 —Jan. 43
Fraser A. L. ...	,,	,,		26-3-42 — 10-8-43
Scott-Fowler R. ...	,,	,,		21-11-43 — 19-2-44
Fordyce H. N. ...	,,	,,		3-4-42 — 26-9-44
Gardner A. ...	,,	,,		12-3-42 — 5-7-42
Gee E. ...	,,	,,		19-3-42 —June'42
Gwinnett R.C.H., O.B.E.	,,	,,		12-3-42 — 31-5-45

NAME	PROJECT	PERIOD ON PROJECT.
Gleed F. G. ...	Manipur Road	1-8-42 — Jan. '44
Granger P. ...	,, ,,	6-4-42 — 18-5-42
Green F. D. ...	,, ,,	15-3-42 — 5-9-43
Grieg J. ...	,, ,,	20-11-42 — 10-6-44
Grierson R. B. ...	,, ,,	18-3-42 — 17-4-42
		20-11-43 — 15-2-44
Hamilton A. C. ...	,, ,,	14-3-42 — Nov. '42
		28-12-42 — 24-6-43
Hearn F. T. H. ...	,, ,,	3-3-42 — 25-5-42
Henderson J. C. ...	,, ,,	4-12-42 — 4-2-43
Herbert D. J. ...	,, ,,	17-4-42 — July '42
Hewitson W. R. ...	,, ,,	15-3-42 — 18-12-42
Hobson E. O. ...	,, ,,	15-3-42 — 15-11-42
Hollifield J. ...	,, ,,	23-10-43 — 26-10-43
Hull H. T. ...	,, ,,	17-3-45 — 17-4-45
Hunt F. R. ...	,, ,,	10-3-42 — 8-8-42
Jaffary L. ...	,, ,,	15-10-42 — 2-1-43
Jeffrey D. F. ...	,, ,,	10-3-42 — 30-1-43
Johnson J. C. ...	,, ,,	18-3-42 — 8-12-42
Joss J. ...	,, ,,	26-3-42 — 20-6-42
Kerr F. M. ...	,, ,,	13-10-43 — 18-10-43
		15-11-43 — 22-3-44
Lees, J., M.B.E. ...	,, ,,	10-3-47 — 18-8-43
Leitch R. A. ...	,, ,,	2-11-42 — 24-12-42
Leonard W. J. ...	,, ,,	17-3-42 — 7-6-42
Lindsay D. D. ...	,, ,,	Dec 42 — 27-4-43
Livingstone J. ...	,, ,,	30-11-42 — 10-2-43
		16-3-43 — 16-5-43
Longley P. R. H. ...	,, ,,	9-3-42 — 18-5-42
Low A. J. D, ...	,, ,,	27-10-42 — 12-11-43
Lumley-Ellis E. P. ...	,, ,,	24-3-42 — July 42
MacDonald A. B. ...	,, ,,	4-3-42 — 11-4-42
Masterton W. ...	,, ,,	22-3-42 — 28-4-43
McGown E. G. ...	,, ,,	20-9-43 — 15-11-44
McNeill H. ...	,, ,,	16-3-42 — 20-5-42
Meston D. G. ...	,, ,,	11-3-42 — 16-5-42
Metcalfe W. F. ...	,, ,,	21-3-42 — 7-6-42
Middleton C. ...	,, ,,	10-3-42 — 8-9-44
Millett H. H. ...	,, ,,	14-12-43 — 19-2-44
Moorman R. ...	,, ,,	12-3-42 — May 42
Morris D. R. ...	,, ,,	15-3-42 — 18-8-44
Morris R. J. ...	,, ,,	8-9-42 — 17-9-43
Mountain C. W. ...	,, ,,	26-3-42 — 6-7-42
Nailer E. M. P. ...	,, ,,	20-4-42 — 22-7-43
		22-11-43 — 2-4-44
Nicholls P .S. ...	,, ,,	20-7-44 — 5-3-45
Olding W. G. ...	,, ,,	14-3-42 — 25-4-42

Name	Project	Period on Project
Palmer M. V. ...	Manipur Road	14-3-42 —14-10-42
Palmer S. G. H. ...	,, ,,	24-4-42 — 3-7-43
Parnell A. L. ...	,, ,,	28-3-42 — 22-4-42
Paterson W. F. ...	,, ,,	3-10-42 — 9-6-44
Petch G. F. ...	,, ,,	12 3-42 —July'42
Pilcher A.H., O.I.E. M.C.	,, ,,	
Pizey R. M. ...	,, ,,	11-3-42 — 15-5-42
Pooley K. ...	,, ,,	6-9-42 — 18-3 43
Ray H. E. A. ...	,, ,,	28-11-42 — 13-5-43
Reed H. R. ...	,, ,,	25 4-42 — 31-9-42
Reid S. A. S. ...	,, ,,	22-10-42 — 8-2-44
Rigby G. F. ...	,, ,,	21-3-42 — 1-9-42
Robertson J. ...	,, ,,	13-4-42 — 30-4-42
Rogers T.E., M.B.E. ...	,, ,,	19-4-47 — 28-2-43
Ross G. D. ...	,, ,,	23-10-42 — 10-8 44
Ross J. C. ...	,, ,,	15-9-42 —11-10-42 2-3-44 — 27-8-44
Rose T. H. ...	,, ,,	11-11-42 — 23-1-43
Rutherford, T.H., M.B.E.	,, ,,	4-3-42 — 2-2-44
Scott W. J. ...	,, ,,	10-12-43 — 20-2-44
Shanks A. G. W. ...	,, ,,	6-8-44 — Dec.'44
Shaw L. C. ...	,, ,,	27-3-42 —June'42
Shaw R.C. M.B.E. ...	,, ,,	14-3-47 — 2-1-45
Shawe E. B. ...	,, ,,	6-4-42 — 23-5-42
Sim G. R. ...	,, ,,	4-3-42 — 27-5-42
Simmons G. F. ...	,, ,,	6-4-42 — Jan.'43
Simpson D. J. ...	,, ,,	23-9-42 —28-11-42
Skene A. ...	,, ,,	16-3-42 —July'42
Smith A. M. ...	,, ,,	7-3-42 — 7-5-42
Smith G. T. ...	,, ,,	3-3-42 —Mar.'42
Taylor E. G. ...	,, ,,	22-10-42 — 28-3-43
Taylor R. C. ...	,, ,,	17-11-42 — 28-1-43
Vipan R. H. ...	,, ,,	6-11-43 — 13-3-44
Walker G. W. ...	,, ,,	15-3-42 — 20-3-44
Watkins M. R ...	,, ,,	26-4-42 — 17-8-42 6-10-42 — 10-8-43
Wattam J. M, ...	,, ,,	12-3-42 — July'42 18-1-43 — 11-6-43
White H. A. ...	,, ,,	8-8-42 — 4-10-44
Wight-Boycott E. C. ...	,, ,,	10-2-44 — 12-8-44
Wilson D. ...	,, ,,	17 3-42 — 27-7-42
Woodcock W. ...	,, ,,	14-3-42 — 30-1-43
Worman E. R. ...	,, ,,	28-4-42 — 10-5-42
Wynne J. L. L. ...	,, ,,	23-3-42 — 10-8-42
Young A. J. ...	,, ,,	12 1 42 — 18-7-42
Meason, A. ...	,, ,,	9-1 42 — 26-5-42
Alves, W. ...	,, ,,	14-1-42 — 30-11-42 (died in motor accident)

NAME	PROJECT	PERIOD ON PROJECT
Palmer M. V. ...	Manipur Road	14-3-42 —14-10-42
Palmer S. G. H. ...	,, ,,	24-1-42 — 3-7-43
Parnell A. L. ...	,, ,,	28-3-42 — 22-1-42
Paterson W. F. ...	,, ,,	3-10-42 — 9-6-44
Petch G. F. ...	,, ,,	12 3-42 —July'42
Pilcher A.H., O.I.E. M.C.	,, ,,	
Pizey R. M. ...	,, ,,	11-3-42 — 15-5-42
Pooley K. ...	,, ,,	6-9-42 — 18-3 43
Ray H. E. A. ...	,, ,,	28-11-42 — 13-5-43
Reed H. R. ...	,, ,,	25 4-42 — 31-9-42
Reid S. A. S. ...	,, ,,	22-10-42 — 8-2-44
Rigby G. F. ...	,, ,,	21-3-42 — 1-9-42
Robertson J. ...	,, ,,	13-4-42 — 30-4-42
Rogers T.E., M.B.E. ...	,, ,,	19-4-47 — 28-2-43
Ross G. D. ...	,, ,,	23-10-42 — 19-8 44
Ross J. C. ...	,, ,,	15-9-42 —11-10-42 2-3-44 — 27-8-44
Rose T. H. ...	,, ,,	11-11-42 — 23-1-43
Rutherford, T.H., M.B.E.	,, ,,	4-3-42 — 2-2-44
Scott W. J. ...	,, ,,	10-12-43 — 20-2-44
Shanks A. G. W. ...	,, ,,	6-8-44 — Dec.'44
Shaw L. O. ...	,, ,,	27-3-42 —June'42
Shaw R.C. M.B.E. ...	,, ,,	14-3-47 — 2-1-45
Shawe E. B. ...	,, ,,	6-4-42 — 23-5-42
Sim G. R. ...	,, ,,	4-3-42 — 27-5-42
Simmons G. F. ...	,, ,,	6-4-42 —Jan.'43
Simpson D. J. ...	,, ,,	23-9-42 —28-11-42
Skene A. ...	,, ,,	16-3-42 —July'42
Smith A. M. ...	,, ,,	7-3-42 — 7-5-42
Smith G. T. ...	,, ,,	3-3-42 —Mar.'42
Taylor E. G. ...	,, ,,	22-10-42 — 28-3-43
Taylor R. C. ...	,, ,,	17-11-42 — 28-1-43
Vipan R. H. ...	,, ,,	6-11-43 — 13-3-44
Walker G. W. ...	,, ,,	15-3-42 — 20-3-44
Watkins M. R ...	,, ,,	26-4-42 — 17-8-42 6-10-42 — 16-8-43
Wattam J. M, ...	,, ,,	12-3-42 — July'42 18-1-43 — 11-6-43
White H. A. ...	,, ,,	8-8-42 — 4-10-44
Wight-Boycott E. C. ...	,, ,,	10-2-44 — 12-8-44
Wilson D. ...	,, ,,	17-3-42 — 27-7-42
Woodcock W. ...	,, ,,	14-3-42 — 30-1-43
Worman E. R. ...	,, ,,	28-4-42 — 10-5-42
Wynne J. L. L. ...	,, ,,	23-3-42 — 19-8-42
Young A. J. ...	,, ,,	12-4-42 — 18-7-42
Meason, A. ...	,, ,,	9-4-42 — 26-5-42
Alves, W. ...	,, ,,	14-4-42 —30-11-42 (died in motor accident)

LIST OF PLANTERS SECONDED FROM THE ARMY FOR WORK ON THE MANIPUR ROAD

NAME	PROJECT	PERIOD ON PROJECT.
Allison, A. M.	... Manipur Road.	2-7-44 — 21-6-45
Arthur, J. B	... ,, ,,	20-9-43 — 20-9-45
Blair, M. D.	... ,, ,,	24-12-43— 10-4-44 6-2-45 — 14-4-45
Bridges, W. M. C.	... ,, ,,	6-2-45 — 20-8-45
Bright, D. B.	... ,, ,,	23-6-44 — 20-1-46
Burnett, D. H.	... ,, ,,	12-12-44 — 5-6-45
Bullick, J.	... ,, ,,	17-2-43 — 3-6-43 1-10-43— 10-7-45
Burnett, A. H.	... ,, ,,	28-3-45 — 9-6-45
Carr, P. S.	... ,, ,,	12-5-45 — 1-6-45
Chambers, M. B,	... ,, ,	20-9-44 — 30-9-45
Clark, D. S	... ,, ,,	5-6-42 — 20-7-43 7-1-44 — 20-3-44
Cleland, A. D.	... ,, ,,	15-6-42 — 31-7-43 27-12-43 — 31-3-44
Colbourne, B.	... ,, ,,	10-11-44 —10-11-45
Conway, B. St. J.	... ,, ,,	16-8-42 — 10-7-43
Cowie, P. W.	... ,, ,,	2-2-45 — 13-2-45
Cox, P. K.	... ,, ,,	3-10-44 — 9-7-45
Donaldson, J. E.	... ,, ,,	4-7-44 — 6-12-44
Donald, W. A.	... ,, ,,	7-1-45 — 10-8-45
Dunbar, D. C.	... ,, ,,	9-7-42 — 31-7-43 24-12-43 — 31-8-45
Elliot, A.	... ,, ,,	15-2-45 — 4-9-45
Fea, W. J. S.	... ,, ,,	8-10-44 — 27-9-45
Finlay, R.	...	5-11-42 — 18-6-43
Fraser, H. H.	... ,, ,,	21-11-42 — 1-10-45
Gee, E. P.	... ,, ,,	12-3-42 — 30-4-43 4-7-44 — 30-9-44
Gilson, E. A.	... ,, ,,	11-6-42 — 25-6-42 15-5-45 — 1-6-45
Hambledon, J.	... ,, ,,	30-4-45 — 23-9-45
Hamilton, A. F.	... ,, ,,	14-6-43 — 7-12-45
Heathcote	... ,, ,,	21-1-45 — 23-9-45

Name		Prisoner		Period on Prisoner.
Hughes, A. T. M.	...	Manipur	Road.	31-7-44 —7-11-44
Hill, H. D.	...	,,	,,	3-12-43 — 1-5-44
Kemp, R. H.	...	,,	,,	31-8-44 — 17-8-45
Lancaster, D. V.	...	,,	,,	6-1-43 — 30-6-44
Lawson, P. M.	...	,,	,,	5-6-42 — 5-10-44
Lindsay, W.	...	,,	,,	14-6-43 — 6-9-45
McAlister, O. R.	...	,,	,,	7-11-42 — 21-6-45
McCullum	...	,,	,,	24-2-44 — 2 4-44
McLeod,	...	,,	,,	24-2-44 —27-8-45
McMullan,	...	,,	,,	20--4-45 — 12-9-45
Milner, E.	...	,,	,,	23-1-44 — 31-3-44
Murray, J. S.	...	,,	,,	1-4-45 — 3-5-45
Parker, H. B.	...	,,	,,	15-6-42 — 30-5-43
Ritchie, J. H.	...	,,	,,	3-1-45 — 6-9-45
Shaw, A. M.	...	,,	,,	25-9-44 —31-10-44
Thom, R. B.	...	,,	,,	1-4-45 — 8-45
Tinley, P. F.	...	,,	,,	1-9-44 — 26-8-45
Twist, R. F.	...	,,	,,	23-9-44 —22-9-45
Walker, A. P.	...	,,	,,	22-3-44 —14-9-45
Warner, N. A. B.	...	,,	,,	9-12-42 — 10-9-45
Wood, A. F.	...	,,	,,	4-12-42 — 31-7-43 1-3-44 — 9-9-45
Williamson, G. G.	...	,,	,,	July 42 (Killed in an accident)

LIST OF MEDICAL OFFICERS WHO SERVED ON THE MANIPUR ROAD.

NAME	PROJECT	PERIOD ON PROJECT.
Anderson, I. R. ...	Manipur Road	4-9-42 — 24-6-44
Banerjee, A. K. ...	,, ,,	Aug.-42 —June 45
Baruah, P. M. ...	,, ,,	20-1-44 — 28-7-44
Berlie, H. C. ...	,, ,,	22-5-42 — 23-3-43
Bertram, D. B. ...	,, ,,	10-8-42 — 15-1-43
		28-2-43 — 31-7-43
Das Gupta. C. C. ...	,, ,,	7-1-45 — 7-9-45
Giblin, H. T. ...	,, ,,	12-4-42 — 10-9-45
Hare, K. P. ...	,, ,,	14-3-42 — 9-1-44
Johnson, R. A. ...	,, ,,	12-11-44 — 19-3-45
King, C. G. ...	,, ,,	18-11-43 — 10-2-44
Lamond, J. D. M. ...	,, ,,	23-3-42 — 30-9-42
Lindsay, A. B., O. B. E. ...	,, ,,	14-3-42 — 17-8-42
Nag, M. ...	,, ,,	8-12-44 — 7-9-45
Robertson, J. R. ...	,, ,,	1-7-42 — 18-1-43
Spreadbury ...	,, ,,	12-7-42 — 21-1-43
		2-5-44 — 13-4-45
Tha Din ...	,, ,,	29-3-44 —11-12-45
Wheeler, A. de C. ...	,, ,,	4-4-45 — 29-9-45
Burgess Barnett ...	,, ,,	2-2-43 — 4-5-43

MAP SHOWING ROUTES FROM BURMA TO ASSAM

Scale 1"=16 Miles nearly

KEY

MOTORABLE ROADS.....
BISHENPUR—JIRI.....
TAMU — PALEL.....
WAKSU—HEIROK.....
TAMU—KALEWA.....
TAMU—SITTAUNG.....
OTHER ROUTES.....
I. T. A. ROUTES TO LEDO.....
OTHER ROUTES TO LEDO.....
INDIA-BURMA BOUNDARY.....

INSET